

## **Divorce and Personality Styles:**

As a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst™ and an expert in divorce and Collaborative Practice, it is always interesting to me to see just how individuals deal with the decisions they will have to make during, what is arguably, one of the most stressful times in their lives. I'm not talking about the individual who is aggressive or passive; stubborn or acquiescing; heartless or caring. Instead, I'm referring to individual styles of conflict management that basically show the way we handle problems that arise in our lives.

Before I go over the different conflict management styles, I think it's important to discuss what we mean by the word 'conflict.' For the purpose of this article, I will define 'conflict' as being nothing more than a challenge in communication. Conflict is neither good nor bad, but I think we would all agree that lively controversies are more beneficial than deadly quarrels. While I would not want to live my entire life in constant conflict, some good results may arise from a certain amount of conflict. For instance, with conflict, interest and curiosity may be stimulated; people grow and establish their own identities; and finally, problems are aired and people adapt to new situations.

We all have our preferred conflict management styles but we should not always use the same conflict management style because each style is effective in specific situations. Here they are:

**Competitive Style** is better used:

- In emergency situations when quick, decisive actions are needed
- When you have the main responsibility/expertise to solve the problems or unpopular changes need to be implemented.

*This style focuses on your interests only*

**Accommodating Style** is better used:

- When the relations to be preserved are more important than achieving your goal
- When the issue is more important to the other person than to you
- When neglecting your own goals is based on your values system (you are saints)
- When you use it as a strategy of losing a battle but hoping to win the war.
- When you want others to learn by their actions and encourage them to express themselves.

*This style focuses on achieving the other's goal*

**Avoiding Style** is better used:

- When you ask yourself “What will happen if I do not do anything?” and if the answer is “Nothing” than probably it is worth avoiding the conflict
- When you consider that you will lose more by confrontation than by avoidance, or the issue at stake is minor.
- When you decide to postpone the conflict because you want to gain time (in order to collect more information, or to be better prepared for the conflict situation, or to let hot emotions cool down).

*This style indicates a low focus on goals or relations*

**Compromise Style** is better used:

- When both parties have equal power
- When you want to achieve temporary settlements in complex matters, as an intermediary steps toward a more sustainable agreement developed through cooperation.
- When is a crisis upon resources such as time, energy or other material resources that are limited and the problem to be solved is important and urgent.

*In this style, you win something and give up something*

**Collaborative (Cooperative) Style** is better used:

- When it is important to preserve important objectives without compromising and at the same time maintaining relations.
- When it is important to get to the roots of unresolved problems that may have lingering for a long time.
- When there is a complex issue, involving many interests and many parties.

*This style places a high importance on mutual goals and relations*

There are numerous combinations of these conflict management styles that produce very interesting, if not typical results. For example:

- ❖ *Competitive vs. Accommodating, Competitive vs. Avoiding* will typically produce a Win-Lose scenario where one party prevails.
- ❖ *Avoiding vs. Avoiding, Competitive vs. Competitive* will typically produce a Lose-Lose scenario with a withdrawal of one or both parties.
- ❖ *Compromise vs. Compromise* will typically produce a Win-Lose/Win-Lose scenario where each party gives up something to get something else.

- ❖ *Collaborative vs. Collaborative* will always produce the best case Win-Win scenario because the couple work together to find the best solution in their lives for their conflict.

So once again, from a purely conflict-related approach, with everything else being equal, we see that Collaboration will produce the best possible results. Before hiring an Attorney for your divorce who is known to be a ‘bulldog’ or who promises to ‘fight for your rights,’ I would ask that you instead consider contacting a collaborative professional (Attorney, Mental Health, or Financial Professional trained in Collaborative Practice) who will put together a collaborative team to effectively help you create that win-win scenario for everyone involved.

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