



Trainer's Guide

to

Successful *Conflict Styles Workshops*

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PRELIMINARY INFO FOR THE TRAINER

This guide is intended to help any group leader, whether novice or experienced as a trainer, to lead an effective workshop on conflict styles. It is keyed to *Style Matters: The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory*. However, it works almost as well with other inventories such as the [Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument](#) that, like *Style Matters*, are based on the [managerial grid](#).

Additional Resources: On the Riverhouse website, www.RiverhouseEpress.com, you can find useful resources including an [introduction to conflict style inventories](#), a [comparison of inventories](#), a [history of Style Matters](#), a [trainers' blog with ideas on leading workshops](#) on conflict styles, and a [long list of web resources](#) on conflict style inventories

Style Matters supports teaching of conflict resolution skills in a variety of training settings. You can design a full day workshop around it. Or you can work with its core ideas in an hour flat, if you have people take and score it on their own before the workshop. *Style Matters* has a lot of information useful to a solo reader, so users can continue to learn after the workshop. If you use the online version (see info on last page or [online](#)) and have people work through the tutorial on their own before arrival, you can use all of your workshop time for discussion and reflection on scores.

In most settings, training time is scarce. We consider about two hours to be the “sweet spot” of time devoted to it. This is enough time for people to really feel they grasp the inventory and get some quite specific insights into themselves, even if the topics and exercises have not been exhausted. If possible, we recommend having people take the inventory in advance since that gives an extra twenty minutes of group time.

What follows is a suggested outline for presenting, administering, and interpreting *Style Matters* (or another inventory whose underlying framework is the Mouton Blake Axis) all in one workshop. Guidance to you as a trainer is in standard text font. Things suggested for you to say to the group are *in italics*:

GETTING STARTED

Suggested Introductory Comments

- ✓ *The bad news about conflict is that **we can't escape it**. Conflict is a **part of being human**. Yet we don't teach how to deal with conflict. How many of you have had a course in conflict resolution? How many parents/couples get training in dealing with conflict? Teachers? Administrators? Religious leaders? Generally none.*
- ✓ *The good news about conflict is that **no meaningful change takes place in the absence of conflict**. Conflict can be a **powerful motivator for change**. It is not difficult to learn basics about conflict that help a lot in making conflict constructive rather than destructive.*
- ✓ *Style Matters is a **tool to learn basic strategies**. Tens of thousands of users have found this a useful roadmap for thinking about conflict.*

ADMINISTERING THE INVENTORY

Pass out the booklets.

- ✓ *This is **not a “test”**. There are no right/wrong answers. Every person answers the questions differently.*
- ✓ *What you get at the end is a set of scores that gives you **a picture of yourself** and your response to conflict. This is **not** a perfect description of you and you should feel free to disagree with it. But it will help you begin a conversation with yourself and begin to think strategically about your responses in future conflicts.*
- ✓ *The point is **not the numbers** but rather to give you **a tool to start thinking about your choices in conflict**.*

Clear instructions are given on page 5. Have people read them and raise questions if there are any, and begin. You should be sure to carefully study the instructions to users on page 5 beforehand so you understand the difference between Instruction Set A and Set B. It is also a good idea to read Note 1 on page 24 beforehand, which elaborates on the difference between individualist and collectivist cultures. You can also read more [here](#) on our website.

Most people can take and score the test in fifteen minutes but a few will probably need twenty. Instructions are given for self-scoring on page 9. Additional guidance to give:

- ✓ *As the first few people begin finishing with the questions, say: **When you are finished, go to page 9.***
- ✓ *When some are finished with scoring, say: **If you are finished with scoring you may go on and read page 10.** (It is fine for people to begin reading the interpretation while they wait for others to finish).*

INTERPRETING THE INVENTORY

Now, the fun part!

The instructions below follow the same learning sequence that is outlined for users in the Guidelines found on pages 10-12 of *Style Matters*. Each step below can be connected to one of the guidelines.

Forget the scores for a few minutes and introduce the group to the idea of conflict styles. With the group, study the diagram on page 13. (A short [Powerpoint presentation presenting the concepts below](#) can also be accessed free on the Riverhouse website.)

EXPLAIN THE DIAGRAM

*Let's first of all study the underlying logic of this inventory.
In any situation of conflict, there are two things going on.*

*One is that people have an **agenda**, that is, **their own goals or expectations**. Sometimes we don't care very much whether our own agenda is met and we are not assertive about it. But sometimes we care a lot and are very assertive. So the vertical axis shows this range, from low commitment to our own agenda to high commitment.*

A second thing that is going on in any conflict: there is a **relationship** of some kind. Sometimes we are very committed to that relationship and our response communicates that to others. Other times we are not very committed to that relationship, or at least in that moment we feel and act as though we don't care. (That might sound bad, but it is not always wrong – for example, if someone you will never see again flashes an insulting gesture at you on the highway, there is no point in trying to “fix” that relationship. Just get home safely and forget about it!) On the diagram, the relationship is charted on a horizontal line, again showing that we may have a **low focus** on (or commitment to) **the relationship** or a **high focus on the relationship**.

If we put these two dynamics together in a diagram, we can identify **five different styles of responding to conflict**. The styles differ according to what we are focusing on in the moment of conflict: our **own agenda**, the **relationship**, or **both**. We will look at these in detail in a few minutes.

A key goal: flexibility.

Each style has strengths and weaknesses. We manage conflict well when we are able to use each style well. The goal is **flexibility** so that we can use each style appropriately. Some of these styles might seem problematic at first glance. For example, the Lion up here on the left says, “We’re doing it my way.” That doesn’t sound so good, does it? But if a child runs out into the street, we don’t want a parent to smile and harmonize like the Teddy Bear down there on the right or be very quiet, like the Turtle on the left. To function well in all aspects of life, we need every one of these styles for various situations. Every style has its place.

The difficulty is that most of us get good at and favor one or two styles, and then we tend to rely on it for all circumstances. We learn much of this when we are still children. In a family, maybe big brother learns that conflict is no problem – he just uses a Directing style and little brother falls into line. It works great – until big brother gets married to a woman who doesn’t Harmonize like little brother did. She wants to use a Cooperating style to work out differences and she gets angry when big brother always insists on things his way. Now he’s in a life crisis! Can he adapt and learn to use other styles as well? That’s the challenge for all of us. It doesn’t matter which styles we prefer. The challenge is to get skilled in all of the styles and be able to use each one when it is most effective.

GIVE A QUICK INTRO TO EACH STYLE

Working off the diagram on page 13, make a few comments about each style, highlighting the emphasis of each. Suggested order for going through the styles: Directing, Harmonizing, Avoiding, Cooperating, Compromising. We prefer this order because it goes from the simple to the more complex.

Everyone gets Directing quickly, for we witness so much of it. Everyone gets Harmonizing quickly too - most of us had to do a lot of that to survive childhood. Ditto for Avoiding. Cooperating is not so familiar to most people; the idea that we can simultaneously assert our own agenda *and* affirm our care for the relationship (by actively supporting the other person and their needs) takes some effort to grasp. Compromising and Cooperating are similar in seeking to maintain both a personal agenda and the relationship, but Compromising is not as confident as Cooperating about being able to find a resolution “if we just keep talking” and seeks an earlier in-between option to settle things.

People grasp each style more easily if they can see and hear it. Choose one or two of the following options:

- ✓ Read the sample quotes for each style aloud to the group with corresponding tone of voice and body language.
- ✓ Describe a simple conflict and demonstrate what each style would sound and look like if used in that conflict. See details in Appendix 2 at the end of this guide.
- ✓ After you've introduced several styles, have two people do a 60 second demonstration roleplay or several of them. See details in Appendix 3. If your group has a lot of time together, watch a soap opera, movie, or newscast that has a lot of conflict and negotiation and note examples of various styles. The movie *Twelve Angry Men*, an old classic featuring the deliberations of a trial jury, is useful for this purpose, as are many soap operas.

If you use any of the demonstrations above, especially if you are a trainer new to these materials, preparation is important. If you are demonstrating by yourself, think through carefully beforehand how you will present each style, perhaps writing out a few phrases for each. Ideally you'll be able to do the demos from memory, without the script, but writing the lines out beforehand helps you to get your mind around the characteristics of each style.

If you involve participants in demos, you are more likely to succeed without losing a lot of time *if you brief the roleplayers in advance during a break*. If you can't do that, you could write out a little exchange between Person A and Person B and ask two volunteers to read it. This comes at the sacrifice of some spontaneity and authenticity but it is fast, gives you complete control, and requires no advance briefing – just hand the scripts to two people and have them read.

Transition to the next phase: As a way of closing this section and transitioning to the next, you can take people to page 10 and read Guideline One there. Point out that they now have already accomplished this. They have the big picture of conflict styles and are ready to apply it in practical ways. The next guideline, Guideline Two, shows how to do this.

UNDERSTANDING THE SCORES

After you've given a "big picture" introduction of the logic underlying the inventory, participants are ready to locate themselves within that picture. Take them to scoring, page 9.

Point out that the inventory gives a snapshot of the user in two settings, one when things are Calm and the other in Storm (when things have gotten more difficult). You will look at the differences between these two later. For now, take them deeper into one or two specific styles and study how those work.

With the group, read Guideline Two down to the Learning Suggestions.

Ask people to select (as individuals) the style they think they are most likely to use when serious differences appear. This is usually the Storm style for which they have the highest score, but it may be the highest in Calm for some.¹

¹ We encourage users to "take the numbers lightly". This instrument is for training purposes, not for settings where a "validated" inventory with high statistical reliability is required. If you want an instrument that is psychometrically validated in this way, consider using the *Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*. Regardless to the instrument used, we empower users when we take a relaxed attitude and encourage them to consider the numbers as thought-provoking but not the final word. We can invite them to trust their own honest self-reflection as a guide and to use the inventory to think about options for the future rather than as a statement of who they are. A relaxed perspective is almost always a better foundation for growth than an anxious one!

Now give them opportunity to discuss their scores with others. People enjoy this and describing their scores and commenting on styles is a very effective learning process. You can do one or both of the options below, depending on time available.

Option A: Mixed Groups

Set things up so that people talk in groups of threes with whomever is close by.

a) Have each person share with their partners which styles they scored highest in. They can turn to pages 14-16 as a reference point and find more information about their styles there. Invite them to comment on the information about their highest style there. Do they recognize some of the costs and benefits of that style in their own relationships? Give 20-30 minutes for this.

b) If you have time, instruct them next to look at and comment about the style they scored *lowest* in. Reflecting on the benefits of that style, do they recognize that they are missing out on some of these (since they seem not to use it very much)? What would it look like to try to use it?

Option B: Same-Style Groups

A different approach is to have people gather in groups of the *same* style. Directors in one group, Avoiders in another, etc. Keep the groups small, 3-4 in each, so everyone has a chance to talk. Set this up quickly and easily by designating five spots in the room, one for each style. Have people go to these spots, link up with 2-3 others who favor that style, and form a group.

Instructions for the groups: *Using pages 14-16, each person should comment about their experience with this style. Do you recognize some of the costs and benefits of this style in your own relationships?* Budget 3-5 minutes per person in the small groups for this.

TRAINER COMMENTS ON SCORES

This is a good point at which to invite several people to volunteer to call out their scores. If you are new as a trainer to *Style Matters* and uncomfortable doing this, don't worry, it is an optional extra. The value of it is that watching the trainer reflect on the numbers seems to help people to do the same thing for themselves. A good way to start is to put up your own numbers and comment on yourself. With experience, your familiarity with the inventory will make it easy to point out patterns to others. List the five styles across the top of a blackboard or sheet of newsprint, as in the chart below. Then as volunteers call out their numbers, write them in a horizontal row for each person.

Cooperating		Directing		Compromising		Avoiding		Harmonizing	
Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm

Comment on each person's scores separately.

- ✓ Begin by circling one or two styles with the highest scores in Calm and do the same thing for Storm.
- ✓ Most users will get the greatest benefit by focusing attention on the style or styles that are highest in Storm, since these are likely to be most active in times of real difficulty. We call this the "preferred Storm style".

- ✓ Begin your interaction with a user's scores by **highlighting the strengths** of the preferred **Storm** style. Empowerment is always the place to begin! You can have the whole group turn to the pages that show strengths and weaknesses of each style. Comment on the things that people who score high in this style usually do well. Then you might wish to note the dangers that people who use this style need to be alert to (costs of over-use).
- ✓ If there is a style or styles that are quite low, encourage the user to explore that style more, and try to get more comfortable with it. If there is a tie for lowest between a style in Storm and one in Calm, focus on the style that is lowest in Calm, since this is probably the style that is getting the least use. (In theory, we have access to more personal resources when we are calm than when we are anxious. Thus a style that we can't access even in Calm could be considered pretty far out of reach.)
- ✓ If the numbers are quite even, a "flat profile", point out that this is viewed as desirable, for it indicates flexibility. The one disadvantage is that others may experience this flexibility as unpredictable. They never know which style they will encounter!²
- ✓ After commenting on one or two Storm scores, note the interaction between Calm and Storm. It is particularly interesting to observe which direction the scores suggest the individual goes in times of stress. Do the numbers shift toward towards greater concern for the relationship or towards task/agenda?
- ✓ With all of your comments, aim to word things along the lines of "people with this style preference often...", rather than "you are...." We are trainers, not psychologists or astrologers!
- ✓ Any user on whose numbers you comment should have "the last word" on the meaning of the numbers. Encourage users to treat the numbers as "food for thought", not as a definitive statement on who they are. Suggest that they set the numbers aside if they think they are not accurate. Encourage them to ask friends and colleagues for a second opinion if they disagree with the scores.

MAKING GOOD STYLE CHOICES

The picture users get of themselves from their score is interesting and useful. But ultimately it is less important than the sections we are now coming to. The real purpose of the inventory is not to focus on what people have been in the past, it is to help them make good choices in the future.

This section goes with Guideline Three on page 10 and pages 13-18 in Style Matters.

DEVELOPING STYLE FLEXIBILITY

Making good style choices begins with a healthy respect for the strengths of each style and awareness of its limits and costs. Your attitude as trainer is crucial. Display and nurture respect for each style. Sometimes, for example, people make fun of the nasty Lion (Director) or the pokey Turtle (Avoider). These two styles when used excessively are the most conspicuous in their limitations. As trainer, be a relaxed ally of all five styles. Respect the strengths of each even as you acknowledge its limitations. Every style really is necessary for successful human relationships.

Someone is not convinced? Doesn't want to ever be a Director?

² When we understand how each style functions, we can better communicate to others what we need to be at our best. For example, someone with strong Avoiding instincts who lives or works with someone with strong Directing tendencies can learn to say, "I'm not ready right now to talk this through with you. I need some time to calm down and think about things. But I want you to know I won't just disappear on you. I'd like to go for a walk and get back to you in two hours..." A lot of energy is wasted in conflicts because people don't understand the *style needs* of the other person. The Hot Tips section of *Style Matters* provides many more such suggestions specific to each style.

For a parent whose four year old child is running towards a busy street, the only loving response is a Directing one. It could be fatal to Avoid, Harmonize, Cooperate, or Compromise. Similarly, when a ship is sinking, we don't want a captain who gathers the crew and says, let's negotiate..... Or a doctor in the emergency room who cannot give clear, no-nonsense orders. In emergencies, we need someone to take charge (Which is why military and police structures are set up on very hierarchical structures. Emergencies is their arena of operation.) We should all be grateful for people who are strong Directors.

But those who naturally prefer Directing have a challenge in self-management if others are to stay grateful. If the emergency room doctor takes the Directing style home to spouse and family and friends, and makes a habit of telling everyone else what to do without paying attention to their needs and feelings, his/her personal life will be miserable.

Cooperating sounds wonderful. It is, in the right place and time. But people who over-use a Cooperating style are likely to get burned out. Too many meetings, too much talk, endless processing but no decision-making, etc.

The challenge is for all of us to get good at all of these styles.

How to work with this section?

When time is short, you can get by with skipping the section on "Choosing Responses to Conflict" on page 17. After all, the previous pages each have a section on the "Benefits" and "Costs of Over-Use" of each style which covers related ideas. If you've spent a bit of time discussing these in the introduction to each style, people will already have some awareness of the idea of seeing each style as possessing both resources and danger.

But if the question of choosing the right style has not already come up in previous discussion, it is a good idea to give it at least a few minutes discussion time. Pages 17 and 18 give useful information about when and when not to use each style. Some options in working with these pages:

- ✓ With the group, read the paragraph at top of page 17. Then put people in pairs or small groups. Each group is assigned a different style and asked to come up with one example of when they have seen this style wisely used and another example of a time when it was inappropriately used. Share these in the larger group. If the group is up for the task, you could have each present their examples as short skits.
- ✓ Do a round of small group discussion focused specifically on appropriate choice of styles. Put people in small groups without reference to styles. Their assignment is to share with others in the small group about: A time when I used a style appropriately and another time when I used a style inappropriately. Encourage them to make reference to the information on pages 17 and 18 as they do this.

WORKING WITH THE STORM SHIFT

Some people experience a change in preferred style as conflict heats up. They begin a conflict with one style but as emotions and stress go up, they shift to a different style. They may shift, for example, from Harmonizing to Directing, or the other way around. This Storm Shift can be quite sudden and surprise or shock others.

The concept of a Storm Shift is not difficult and need not occupy much time in a workshop. Options for working with it:

- ✓ With the group read Guideline 4 on page 11, including the Learning Suggestions that accompany it. Invite questions or comments.
- ✓ Review with the group the difference between Calm and Storm conditions. You can use the chart below as a resource.
- ✓ Put people in groups of three and invite them to comment on their scores regarding a Storm shift. If there is a Storm shift apparent in their scores, invite people to reflect on the inner signs they associate with this shift: a suddenly pounding heart, heat in the face or neck, a flash of anger in the head, fear in the chest, churning in the gut, clenched hands, etc. Even if there is no Storm shift apparent in people's numbers, it is still useful to reflect on how they "somatize" conflict in general. That is, where in the body do they respond to conflict? What strategies or personal disciplines do people find helpful to manage their response to intense conflict? Even people who don't have a significant Storm shift benefit from identifying the symptoms of rising anger.

This section goes with Guideline Four on page 12

Calm conditions	Storm conditions
Our response when we first realize there are differences. We are not yet very upset or anxious. The style we use for day-to-day decision-making and problem-solving of difference that has not stirred emotions strongly.	After we've made some effort to resolve things without success. Emotions have risen; we are anxious, upset, worried, etc.

Some people **stay the same** in calm and storm. But some people have sharp differences between the two. For example:

- ✓ A Directing person who in Calm conditions is very assertive might rather suddenly go quiet, or back off and say, "Well, if you feel *that* strongly about it, let's do it your way...." This would be a Storm shift from Directing to Harmonizing.
- ✓ Someone who is normally eager to please might indicate a lot of flexibility in the beginning of a conflict and then suddenly turn sharp and angry: "Look, I've had enough of this. I insist that...." This would reflect a shift from Harmonizing in Calm to Directing in Storm.

People who show little difference in Calm and Storm are usually perceived as steady and predictable. People who have a sharp contrast between the two may surprise or alarm others and themselves. It is *important to be self-aware* if people have a sharp shift in styles so they can manage it better.

Learning suggestions: Compare your numbers in Calm and Storm. If there is a shift in any of your styles of two points or more from Calm and Storm, pay attention to this. If the shift is four points or more, chances are that your Storm shift sometimes confuses or alarms others. In conflict situations, learn to recognize the inner signs that accompany a shift: a suddenly pounding heart or heat in the face or neck, a flash of anger in the brain, fear in the chest. Ask people who know you well to give you feedback about what they notice when you become angry. Simple **awareness** is your most important tool for self-management. If awareness alone is not enough, discuss with others you trust what you could do when you feel stressed that would help you use the style you want to use.

HOT TIPS – HOW TO SUPPORT OTHERS

This is probably the most rewarding and empowering part of the inventory. The tips are specific, detailed and practical. Most people are intrigued by the insights that arise. The tips in *Style Matters* are written to help users see how to bring out the best in *others*. However, for discussion in a training setting, it works better to frame the discussion differently, at least in the beginning: Which tips would work best for me if someone else used them on me? This framing enables participants to speak as authorities from territory they know well, their own needs³. The learning comes from hearing others in the group – with different style preferences - reflect on what works for them. And of course, reviewing and becoming clearer about the needs that tend to accompany their *own* style preference empowers people to take responsibility to communicate their needs to others.

Options for working with the Hot Tips section:

- ✓ Review pages 19-21 with the group. If time is tight, it is possible to review key hot tips in all five styles in ten minutes or less.
- ✓ Have people find one or two other people with different styles preferences. In these small groups, each person goes through the tips for their own preferred style with the others in the small group and comments. For example, “Yes, the first hot tip would really work if you tried it on me. The second, not so well.....”
- ✓ A variation on the above is to have people who work together do this in pairs or teams. They sit in a circle (assuming it is a team) and each person uses this section to make some comments about self. “I am high in Directing and Cooperating. Here are a couple tips you should know about me that would really help me if you get in a conflict with me....”
- ✓ You can form caucus groups for each style (one group is Directing, another Harmonizing, etc.). Give the groups 15 minutes to discuss the hot tips and then give a reportback to the large group. “These are things we really want the rest of you to know about our style....”
- ✓ Have each person create a “MySupport Page”. They review the Hot Tips for their highest scoring styles and from these select those they would appreciate if done to them by other people. Then they review the Hot Tips for their *lowest* scoring style and select the tips they would *not* appreciate if done to them by others. With this information, anyone can easily create a page of suggestions for others around them. That is, if you get in a conflict with me, DO this....., DON’T do this....
- ✓ See Exercise 6 on page 23, which guides colleagues in an organization to reflect on conflict style pairings that have been difficult. Discussion of Hot Tips is included in this exercise.

This section goes with Guideline Five and pages 19-21 in *Style Matters*.

³ This reflects a basic pedagogical principle: Whenever learning can be tied to authentic self-knowledge, the yields are high.
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CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE STYLES

Style Matters is designed for people of varying cultural backgrounds and achieves this by providing differing instructions for users depending on their background⁴. Trainers in settings such as mid-stream North American users (Individualist culture) can ignore Instruction Set B and forego all discussion of cultural issues. When time is short, this may be the best strategy.

But cultural diversity is a big issue in modern life. Many groups *are* diverse, a reality that is often overlooked. As a trainer you can introduce awareness that will be valuable for many users by making a modest investment of time in reflecting with a group on how culture influences response to conflict.

The most important preparation you can do as a trainer for such discussion is to bring a clear understanding about the difference between *individualist and collectivist culture*, also known as *low context and high context cultures*. Different scholars came up with these names and each emphasizes slightly different things, but basically they are talking about the same ideas. If you expect to have people in the workshop from diverse cultural backgrounds, make a point of reading the Instructions on page 5 and Note 1 on page 24 and the [page on cultures](#) on the Riverhouse website before the workshop so you understand them clearly and have a grasp of the difference between those two modes of functioning. To learn more, do web research on “individualist collectivist cultures” or on “high context low context cultures”. (Don’t put the quotes in your search, just the words; otherwise the search engine will only bring up pages that use exactly the characters as they stand between the quotes).

If you can allocate some group time to cultural issues, here are some options:

- ✓ In many groups there are individuals with one foot in each culture. Having grown up in a conflict avoidant Mennonite farming community in Pennsylvania, but gone to school in Boston and worked in many modern cities, I myself am one such person. The same could be said about, for example, many Native Americans or aboriginals who work in the professional world. An American or German development worker in rural Africa or Latin America would be examples of people with roots in Individualist cultures whose work requires them to function in communitarian settings. Ask for volunteers who feel that they live or work in both kinds of communities and **interview** them, in the presence of the whole group. Ask questions that draw out their experiences of the differences between these cultures in general, and specifically in dealing with conflict. How do they function in each culture when their preferences differ with those of others? What does it feel like to move back and forth between the two? Invite group members to share in response.
- ✓ Give a brief **presentation** on the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures. Then put people into mixed pairs or small groups and have them talk about what they have heard. Suggest that each person share a conflict with someone from a different culture and comment on an insight

⁴ The key difference between the Instruction Set A and Set B is that Set A invites users to think about themselves “in general” while Set B guides users to think about a *specific* relationship. The context specific instructions of Set B are more appropriate for users who come from cultural backgrounds with strong communitarian influences. In such settings, people instinctively seek out information from the context before deciding what is an appropriate response to a conflict. Whereas in individualist cultures people tend to look inwards and speak from their individual preferences; in communitarian cultures, people instinctively consider external factors. Showing respect for age, roles, status, tradition, and community norms is often considered more important than satisfying individual preference. Thus, in a communitarian culture, the question “How do you deal with conflict?” raises another question, “With whom is the conflict?” Instruction Set B enables users to apply details of context so as to be able to comfortably choose an answer.

about this conflict from the concept of individualist vs. collectivist cultures. Encourage them to be resources to each other in understanding what happened, and to use the collectivist/individualist framework as a tool if possible.

- ✓ **Drawing as a discussion tool.** Exercise 7 on page 23 describes a discussion exercise for small groups as follows. Put people into small groups of individualist background only or collectivist background only. Ask each group to create a picture of a conflict experienced by someone in their group, using vehicles as a major part of the drawing. Have each group share with the larger group: What kind of vehicle or vehicles did they choose to represent the major parties and why? Who is driving the vehicles? Who else is in the picture and with what connections to the conflicting people? What factors do conflictants consider in deciding how to respond to the conflict? When all groups have shared, reflect as whole group. What insights do you gain about differences between individualist and collectivistic patterns in dealing with conflict? What insights do people get about relationships or conflicts they may have experienced that have cultural dimensions?
- ✓ A similar exercise: Put people in similar groups (collectivist in one; individualist in another). Ask each group to talk about an experience when they saw a major conflict within their own culture. What were the things that seemed to shape people's efforts to find resolution in these conflicts? What constructive things were done to try to resolve the conflict? What destructive things were done? What would an intermediary try to do in their culture? After these caucus groups have had time to reflect on a conflict, bring the groups together and share descriptions. Then lead a group discussion on what are the differences between the two cultures.

It is true of course that selfishness, jealousy, and resentment are universal and create similar responses everywhere. But they often express themselves in cultural ways. Someone who identifies self strongly as "I" is likely to think and do different things in times of conflict than someone who identifies self strongly in terms of "we" (family, group, community). Perhaps more to the point, when people try to rise above these petty responses, they do so in ways deeply influenced by culture.

CLOSING

Exercise number 7 on page 23 is an empowering way to end.

You could have people write a **memo of advice** to themselves. What are the things they want to work on in the coming month? Be specific, when, where, how.... If you as trainer are in a position to do individual follow-up, this memo would be a great place to start conversations later. Eg: let's review your memo to yourself.... How do you feel you are doing with it....?

You could do a **closing circle**. Sit or stand in a large circle (or if a large group, several smaller ones). Go around the circle and invite each person to share one thing they will take away from this workshop. A variation: each person gets one sentence to dedicate this experience to a person in their life past or present who taught them important values about dealing well with conflict.



TRAINING APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

Training Exercise: Memo from a Supervisor

This exercise is used after the trainer has worked with the group in explaining the logic of the five styles and reviewing how each style works. It was devised by Carolyn Schock-Shenk, professor at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, and written up by Larry Dunn, professor at Fresno Pacific College, Fresno California.

Divide the large group into small groups mixed so that there is at least one representative in each group for each of the five styles. Hand a copy of the memo below to each person. Fold the memo or hand it out face down, and ask that no one read the memo until instructed. When everyone has a copy, ask them to open the memo or turn it over and read it silently. As they do this, write on the board:

Take 2-3 minutes and jot down a few words or phrases in response to these questions:

- 1) When I got this memo I felt/thought.....
- 2) What I want/need in dealing with this is.....

Give people a couple minutes on this. Then direct them into small group discussion. Ask them to sit in a circle and go around the circle, sharing their responses to the question. Give at least 20 minutes for this sharing and more if possible. Ask them to draw on the conflict style inventory materials to reflect on and explain their response.

This exercise helps participants to realize how differently people respond to the same situation/event. It also helps them understand why others respond so differently.

MEMO

TO: You

FROM: Your Supervisor

RE: Your Performance

DATE: Today

I have had several reports in recent weeks suggesting that you are having difficulty relating to your colleagues.

I would like to discuss this with you in my office on Friday this week at 3:00 pm.

APPENDIX TWO

Continued from training notes on page 4.

Here is a strategy to **demonstrate the five styles with one case study**. A veteran trainer writes:

In presenting the styles, I often take a simple conflict like two partners trying to decide what to do on a Friday night. As I describe the Directing style, I work with this as an example, and show what it would sound like if someone is using Directing style. Something like, “We’re going to go to a movie (said in a commanding voice) A walk in the park? Don’t be stupid!” I point out that the personal agenda of the Director is extremely prominent and no sense of commitment to the relationship comes through at all. Harmonizing in this example might sound like, “Oh, whatever, I just want to be with you.....”

For Avoiding, I ask the group what an Avoiding response might be, and they usually correctly guess that there’d be no discussion, or just a few mutters but no really discussion.

Cooperating: “There’s a new movie in town that I’d really like to see. I’d love to go with you. But I want to do something we’re both happy with. What were you thinking about for tonight?”

Compromising: “I thought about seeing that new movie, but I guess mainly I want to do something that helps me forget the week. You want to stay home? Ok, how about if we rent a video.....”

APPENDIX THREE

Continued from training notes on page 4.

In this approach the trainer sets up demonstration roleplays that give a sense of how various styles operate. Here are several ideas:

1. After you’ve introduced Directing and Harmonizing, have two people demonstrate the use of these styles in a two minute conversation with each other. One uses Directing and the other Harmonizing.
2. Avoiding is so obvious it hardly requires a demo. Maybe sitting alone doing their own thing. Or showing the lame little excuses people make to each other when they are avoiding and trying to be polite about it. It’s interesting to ask about the “self-talk” we do when we choose avoidance as a response.
3. Introduce Cooperating and then do a demonstration of Cooperating and Harmonizing (perhaps noting that Cooperators tend to get uncomfortable when someone is overly Harmonizing because the Cooperator then appears to be Directing, even though that is not intended.)
4. Introduce Compromising and then do a demo showing Compromising and Directing interacting.



ABOUT THIS CONFLICT STYLE INVENTORY

Style Matters is a 24 page conflict style inventory that scores users on five common responses to conflict. Different instructions are given for users from individualistic and collectivist cultures. Each style has several pages outlining its strengths and the costs of over-using it, plus tips for bringing out the best in people who favor this style. Users need 10-15 minutes to take the test. Interpretation can be done in 30 minutes or up to 8 hours. A fifteen-page *Trainers' Guide* can be downloaded for free on the Riverhouse website.

Style Matters is [available for purchase](#) in full-color or in part-color for \$4.95 to \$8.95 depending on quantity. A **digital PDF download** can be purchased on our site for \$4.95 and rights to make copies of it for \$2.95 per copy. An [Online Version](#) is also available featuring instant scoring and interpretation, a full online tutorial, easy emailing of scores, a 360 feedback option, and expanded coverage of related topics, for \$5.95 per user depending on quantities.

WHY TRAINERS LOVE *STYLE MATTERS*

- *Style Matters* uses a simple "five-styles-of-conflict" framework familiar to many trainers. If you have worked with another five-styles framework previously you won't have to learn a whole new framework.
- Questions are answered on a 1-6 spectrum; no forced choice questions!
- It honors the strengths and raises awareness of the limits of all styles.
- Cross-cultural option (included in all versions but is unobtrusive when not needed) makes *Style Matters* credible to people from diverse cultural backgrounds and helps groups talk about cultural differences.
- A full page of tips for each style gives clear guidance on how to bring out the best in others. Participants go home with insights that really make a difference.
- Step-by-step *Trainer's Guide* makes it easy to plan workshops. Fourteen pages of clear instructions, free!
- Great discussion questions at the end of each booklet. Put people in small groups and watch discussions take off with proven starters.
- Low-cost. Affordable for virtually all groups.

VALIDATION OF *STYLE MATTERS*

A recently completed doctoral research study using *Style Matters* found the instrument performed well in reliability testing and is "valid and reliable". Jean Chronis Kuhn, who received her Doctorate in Nursing Practice at Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions, administered *Style Matters* to Massachusetts nursing home directors to assess conflict management styles before and after a conflict management teaching intervention. In her conclusion, Chronis Kuhn wrote: "One... consequence was the unanticipated finding that the adapted version of the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory (KCSI) performed so well during reliability testing, leading to the conclusion that the model and conflict measurement tools have immense applicability to other nursing settings as well as sustainability." Additional validation studies are presently underway.

QUOTES FROM USERS OF *STYLE MATTERS*

ALL QUOTES BY PERMISSION.

“We were previously using the Thomas-Kilmann in our staff trainings and have received a lot of positive feedback since the switch.”

* Michael E. Rhodes, LCSW, CPHQ, Director of Quality Improvement, Preferred Behavioral Health of NJ, Brick, NJ

“I want to say how pleased I am with the instrument. Earlier this Fall I previewed the instrument and facilitators guide - last week was the first time I had an opportunity to use it and it was very well-received by the group.”

* Doris Trainor, Director of Employee Relations and Professional Development, Loyola College, Baltimore, MD

“We have used the *Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory* twice and are extremely pleased.....”

* James Reynolds, Organizational Development and Training, Department of Consumer and Business Services, Oregon

“I use *Style Matters* as a teaching tool in my basic mediation classes and in seminars for experienced conflict resolution professionals. Every time I use the inventory, participants become thoroughly engaged in learning about their own and others' conflict styles. When they evaluate classes and seminars, they frequently write that they will use the information learned through the inventory.”

* Walter Wright, Associate Professor, Legal Studies, Department of Political Science, Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas

“Recently I used your conflict style inventory with a local organization.. We spent a day on it and they really liked it. People commented a lot about how much they got out of it..... “

* Phoebe Kilby, Sympoetica, Woodstock, Virginia

“Having used [it] for several years, I can say it is hands-down the best thing on the market. I do a fair amount of mediation training and I find that the approach the inventory takes makes it extremely useful for training..... I have also used it with professionals (engineers, planners, lawyers) and find it effective in introducing concepts and skills of conflict resolution.”

* Laura Bachle, Confluence Consulting

“Very helpful in starting discussion and giving us a framework to use when we are processing conflicts within the group. It's simple to understand and fun to work with!

* Penn Garvin, Long-time trainer, mediator, community activist and founder of International Peacebuilders, Managua, Nicaragua

“Finally, a multi-faceted tool that unpacks a diversity of conflict styles without putting one in a box. Bravo! The highlights of culture, situational context and conflict intensity are welcomed complexities that give integrity to the inventory.... [It was] a thought-provoking experience in discovering stepping stones for conflict transformation competencies..”

* Carl Stauffer, Co-ordinator, Regional Peace Network Southern Africa, Mennonite Central Committee

“..... a wonderful tool in both mediation and counseling settings in the United States and internationally. It has been especially helpful in my leadership training courses taught in the US, Philippines, and Congo-DRC.”

* Tony Redfern, Executive Director, New Path Center, Inc. , Kingsburg, California

“An excellent tool! A thorough presentation that can be used by people from all cultures. Asks the right questions, deals with the important reality that people react differently to conflicts in the beginning than later when they intensify. The reflections and discussion section is really well done. The suggestions are practical, and allow participants to go deeper into analysis.”

* Brian Bloch, Director, ISKCONResolve, Mumbai, India

“A very useful instrument. Concise, well organized, with easy to follow instructions. Interpretation is clear, simple, and specific. The helpful "Hot Tips for Working with Styles of Others" reflect the competence and experience of the author. This is an instrument I am eager to use in my work as a consultant and teacher. “

* Marcus G. Smucker, PhD. Congregational consultant, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

“... a huge success in class. My students were very fascinated by their results...Thank you so much!”

* Professor at North Carolina College