

## Conflict Resolution for Women

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November 29, 2012  
Executive Women in Agriculture



Whether you win a match or lose a match, in terms of your emotions,  
it's important to be level headed.

— *Maria Sharapova*

## Conflict: Definition



- A competitive or opposing action of incompatibles
- A disagreement through which the parties involved *perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns*

### Types of Conflict

Out-of-Control Conflict	Managed Conflict
Damages relationships	Strengthens relationships
Focuses on fault finding and blaming others	Encourages open communication and cooperative problem solving
Creates enemies and hard feelings	Deals with real issues and concentrates on win-win resolution
Loud, hostile and chaotic	Orderly, calm and focused

Source: [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary)

## Understanding Conflict in Your Own Life



Consider your personal or professional environment and examine the following:

- What are key sources of conflict in my life?
- When do they tend to occur?
- What observations can I make about myself during conflict?

## Reflection

Reflect on the past year and identify two conflicts. First think of a conflict that was managed well and then think of a conflict that was out-of-control. What characteristics of the resolution process can be attributed to both situations?

## Conflict Resolution Styles

### Collaborating

- Highly assertive and empathetic at the same time
- Collaborators willingly invest time and resources into finding a "win-win" solution
- In general, this conflict style is recommended above all others

### Competing

- Maximizes individual assertiveness and minimizes empathy
- Competitors typically view conflict as a "win or lose" predicament
- Feelings of intimidation may lead to a lack of cooperation from others

### Avoiding

- Characterized by inaction and passivity
- Avoiders adopt a "wait and see" attitude
- By neglecting conflict, avoiders risk allowing problems to fester out of control

### Harmonizing

- Characterized by high concern for others while having low concern for one's own self
- General concern for maintaining positive and stable social relationships

### Compromising

- Compromisers value fairness and anticipate mutual give-and-take interactions
- Compromisers often believe that agreeableness will encourage others to meet half-way



*Brooks, Donna, and Lynn Brooks. Seven Secrets of Successful Women. McGraw-Hill, 1997.*  
*Bolton, Robert. People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others & Resolve Conflicts. Simon and Schuster, 1979.*

## Should I even go there?



1. Is the problem well understood? Do the parties' understanding differ?
2. Is this a conflict of logic or emotion? What emotional buttons are being pushed?
3. Is this your conflict – or have you been brought in by another party (and the conflict is really theirs).
4. Is it possible to solve the conflict with a win/win through compromise?
  - What is your ideal outcome?
  - What are you willing to live with?
5. Is there someone you can practice with (to either lay out the logic, or understand the emotional energy and practice managing it)
6. Is it possible to break the conflict into several pieces (fractionate the problem)?

## Six Steps for Conflict Resolution



- 1) **Know yourself**
  - Understand your perceptions, biases and trigger points (what emotions are involved)
- 2) **Be Proactive**
  - No time is better than the present. Don't wait, communicate (unless practice is needed)
- 3) **Listen, Listen, Listen** (do they understand the problem the same you do?)
- 4) **Articulate your needs**
  - Be clear, specific, honest and respectful (be open for compromise)
- 5) **Approach problem solving with flexibility**
  - Generate options vs. deferring judgment
- 6) **Build an agreement that works**
  - Is the agreement fair? Balanced? Realistic?
  - Implement and evaluate

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