# Policy-Oriented Introspective Exercise

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**Purpose:** A primary goal of the RPC is to cultivate productive and trusting working relationships between policymakers and researchers. However, ideological differences and interpersonal styles can present barriers to cultivating such relationships. Therefore, the following activity will facilitate proactive consideration of your values and interpersonal style that can help you to prepare for tensions that may arise from value conflict in the policy arena.

## Values and Beliefs

Reflect on the list of core values and beliefs below. Rank your **top five** values and beliefs.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| _____Dependability | _____Knowledge | _____Loyalty | _____Commitment |
| _____Open-mindedness | _____Consistency | _____Honesty / Transparency | |
| _____Efficiency | _____Innovation | _____Creativity | _____Compassion |
| _____Optimism | _____Passion | _____Respect | _____Faith |
| _____Education | _____Perseverance | _____Patriotism | _____Service to others |
| _____Egalitarianism | _____Meritocracy | _____Diversity | _____Fairness |

## Conflict Management Styles Assessment

Source: *Reginald (Reg) Adkins, PhD, Elemental Truths*

We each have our own way of dealing with conflict. The techniques we use are based on many variables such as our basic underlying temperament, our personality, our environment and where we are in our professional career.

Each statement below provides a strategy for dealing with a conflict. Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 4 indicating how likely you are to use this strategy. Think of the following statements within the context of your **work environment**.

| 1 = Rarely | 2 = Sometimes | 3 = Often | 4 = Always |
|---|---|---|---|

Be sure to answer the questions indicating how you *would* behave rather than how you think you *should* behave.

| QUESTIONS | RATING |
|---|---|
| **1 = Rarely  2 = Sometimes      3 = Often   4 = Always** | |
| 1.  I explore issues with others so as to find solutions that meet everyone's needs. | |
| 2.  When there is a disagreement, I gather as much information as I can and keep the lines of communication open. | |
| 3.  I try to see conflicts from both sides. What do I need? What does the other person need? | |
| 4.  I argue my case and insist on the merits of my point of view. | |
| 5.  I find conflicts challenging and exhilarating. | |
| 6.  I can figure out what needs to be done and I am usually right. | |
| 7.  When I find myself in an argument, I usually say very little and try to leave as soon as possible. | |
| 8.  Being at odds with other people makes me feel uncomfortable and anxious. | |
| 9.  I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself. | |
| 10. I try to meet the expectations of others. | |
| 11. I try to accommodate the wishes of my friends and family | |
| 12. I explore issues with others so as to find solutions that meet everyone's needs. | |
| 13. I try to negotiate and adopt a give-and-take approach to problem situations. | |
| 14. I prefer to compromise when solving problems and just move on. | |
| 15. To break deadlocks, I try to meet people halfway. | |

# How to score the Conflict Management Assessment

To find your most preferred conflict style, total the points in the respective categories. The one with the highest score indicates your most commonly used strategy. The one with the lowest score indicates your least preferred strategy.

| Conflict Management Style | Sum of Items | Your total |
|---|---|---|
| Collaborating | 1-3 | |
| Competing | 4-6 | |
| Avoiding | 7-9 | |
| Accommodating | 10-12 | |
| Compromising | 13-15 | |

## Brief Descriptions of the Five Conflict Management Styles

**Collaborating Style:** Problems are solved in ways in which an optimum result is provided for all involved. Both sides get what they want and negative feelings are minimized. *Pros:* Creates mutual trust; maintains positive relationships; builds commitments. *Cons:* Time consuming; energy consuming.

**Competing Style:** Authoritarian approach. *Pros:* Goal oriented; quick. *Cons:* May breed hostility.

**Avoiding Style:** The non-confrontational approach. *Pros*: Does not escalate conflict; postpones difficulty. *Cons*: Unaddressed problems; unresolved problems.

**Accommodating Style:** Giving in to maintain relationships. *Pros*: Minimizes injury when we are outmatched; relationships are maintained. *Cons*: Breeds resentment; risk of exploitation.

**Compromising Style:** The middle ground approach. *Pros:* Useful in addressing complex issues without simple solutions; all parties are equal in power. *Cons*: No one is ever really satisfied; less than optimal solutions get implemented.

# Web-based, Interactive Activities

## Partner Discussion

1. *Using your strengths*- for your most commonly used conflict strategy and highest ranked value, how might this be an asset when interacting with people who have values or beliefs different from your own?

2. In what ways does your identity (e.g., culture, ethnicity, political ideology, upbringing, profession?) influence your values or beliefs?

_____

## Scenario- Brainstorm Activity

1. Imagine you're meeting with a policymaker from your town to discuss family-friendly policies that can improve the gender wage gap. You start to present the key facts about the policy issue and notice that the staffer seems disengaged. As you continue your spiel highlighting the differences in pay between men and women in your district, the staffer interrupts you to ask about other factors besides gender that might play a role in differences in pay. The staffer spends the next several moments explaining why they believe that factors like *skill, hard work, and dedication* are more reasonable explanations for the pay gap between men and women.

*Considering your values and conflict management style, how might you navigate this scenario?*

2. Imagine you're meeting with a policymaker from your town to discuss safety in schools. You start to present key facts about the policy issue and the policymaker seems to be extremely invested in the conversation, until you begin to focus on the impact of lax gun control on school shootings. The policymaker interjects, agreeing that school safety is a top priority, but insisting that they will not engage in any conversation related gun control. You see these two issues as going hand-in-hand.

*Considering your values and conflict management style, how might you navigate this scenario?*