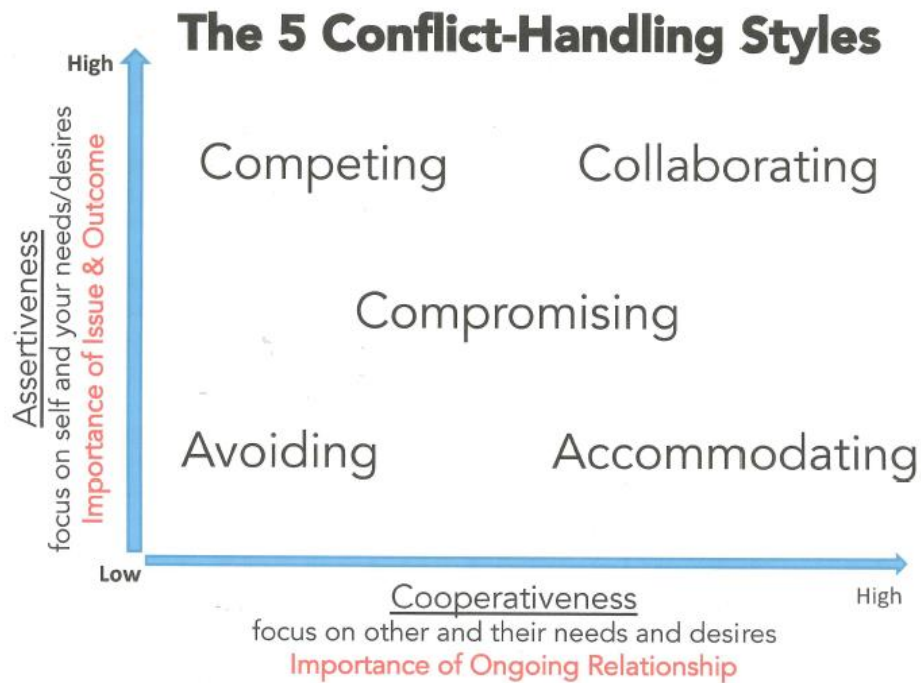


500 WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Want to have a difficult conversation?

Think first about where you and the person you want to talk with fall on this graph.



Keys to a good conversation

Before the talk

1. Define your purpose: Think of the best case outcome, a compromise outcome, and the worst case scenario. Knowing what your desired outcome is will help to direct the conversation.
2. Reflect on your responsibility: “How have I contributed to the problem?” “What do I think this person’s experience of the problem is?”
3. Prepare and practice what you want to say—especially the first sentence. An example would be “Hi ____, you know I value this relationship, so I’m hoping we can find some time to talk about ____ while I’m home this break.”

During the talk

1. Meet in a neutral comfortable place and set aside enough time. Being rushed is never a great way to have a difficult conversation because it invited unintentional stress.
2. Agree to common courtesy: Listen to learn, take turns, and acknowledge the other persons’ perspective. Remember, acknowledgement is not agreement.
3. Find common ground: identify shared values to help create harmony going forward.
4. Take a break or have a snack to break up the conversation. This will give both persons time to reflect.

After the talk

1. Work out the details if a compromise was devised.
 2. Follow up and follow through! If you make a promise to change a behavior, stick to it.
- Remember: If you can’t solve the conflict yourselves, bring in someone else to help out!*

Adapted from Nora Ludviksen and Jim Levy, www.thetablemediation.com



500 WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Don't want to have a difficult conversation?

Every year, articles come out about how to talk to relatives who don't agree with you. These articles generally put the entire burden of having a difficult conversation on the person who is reading the article, which is generally the more open-minded person. It's a lot of work, oftentimes for very little reward.

Before you decide whether you want to engage, consider the following: 1. Who is your audience? If the person is super ideological, nothing you say will change their mind. 2. Even if you reach some mutual understanding, most likely, your relative will return to their Facebook feed and all will be lost. 3. Let's not pretend that respecting each other is the same as respecting their terrible ideas. 4. Remember you cannot logic anyone out of beliefs based on fear or conspiracy theories.

Still interested? Here are some tips:

Know your audience

Who is persuadable and who is a lost cause? Are you the cool older cousin? Talk to the younger people in your family. Talk to those who are not engaged. Ask what they care about and describe related movements that may give them hope.

Action over opinions

Have some passive relatives who can step up their activism game?

1. Get them registered to vote
2. Identify local groups, like 500 Women Scientists, they can join
3. Show them groups that compile actions people can take from multiple groups
4. Look up their nearest Congressional Swing District for them

Focus on consequences policy has for real people

Face it, you may end up arguing with Uncle Dave. Don't get distracted by conspiracy theories or arguments that don't affect people's lives. Instead, say something like, "Senators voted to take away my healthcare and that hurts me and my family. That's what I care about." Or, "I'm not interested in whether you think HuffPo is real news. I care that Senators voted to increase graduate student taxes by 400%." Keep your eyes on real issues you care about: healthcare, science funding, reproductive rights, higher wages, civil rights, clean air, etc.

If it starts to devolve, be prepared with "You can say whatever you want, other people don't have to agree with it or even think it's interesting or based in reality. I'm saying I care about issues that affect me and my family and if you can't recognize that, I don't see why you want to talk to me about politics."

And if it goes any further, remember to grab all the cookies before you burn it to the ground.

