

Productive Conflict Profile

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WILEY

Introduction

WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Patti, when you think of workplace conflict, what comes to mind? Arguing? Compromise? Finding solutions? Do you think of gossiping and hurt feelings? Or colleagues taking ownership for mistakes?

Whatever you think of, conflict comes down to a **difference of opinions involving strong emotions**. It can range from brief, explosive disputes to subtle, long-lasting issues. Either way, conflict triggers different behaviors in each of us, from destructive to productive responses. And while conflict can be very uncomfortable, it is a natural and inevitable part of relationships.

Because conflict will look different depending on the people and situations involved, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to making it productive. Instead the solution starts with you.

Everything DiSC® Productive Conflict is designed to improve self-awareness around conflict behaviors. It isn't about conflict resolution; rather, it's focused on helping you curb destructive thoughts and behaviors so that conflict can become more productive, improving your workplace results and relationships.

CORNERSTONE PRINCIPLES

- Conflict is an **inevitable** part of workplace relationships, and it can also be **productive**.
- Your conflict interactions may be influenced by **other factors**: hierarchy, culture (organizational or social), business atmosphere, personal experiences, etc.
- Your response to conflict situations is **in your own control**. You cannot control how others respond to conflict.
- Learning about other people's DiSC® styles can help you **understand their conflict behaviors** and how they may differ from your own.
- You can have **productive conflict** by using DiSC to more effectively engage with others.

OVERVIEW OF THE DiSC® MODEL

Dominance

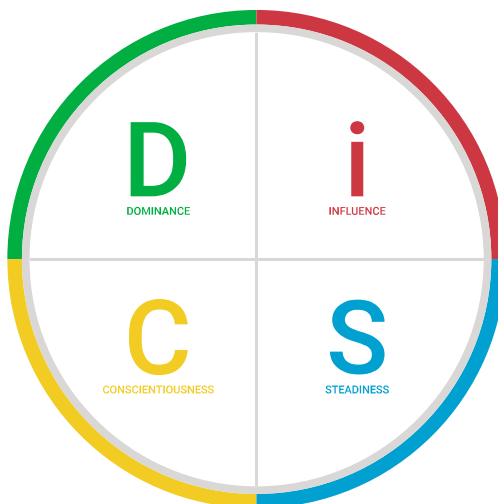
- Direct
- Tough-minded
- Strong-willed
- Forceful
- Firm

In conflict, focuses on:
logic and victory

Conscientiousness

- Analytical
- Reserved
- Precise
- Private
- Systematic

In conflict, focuses on:
justice and logic



influence

- Outgoing
- Enthusiastic
- Optimistic
- Lively
- High-Spirited

In conflict, focuses on:
expression and feelings

Steadiness

- Even-tempered
- Accommodating
- Patient
- Tactful
- Humble

In conflict, focuses on:
feelings and consensus

Your DiSC[®] Style in Conflict

Your DiSC Style: i

Patti, your dot and shading say a lot about how you respond in conflict. Because your dot is located in the middle of the i region, you have an i style. Your shading indicates your priorities and where you focus your energy. During conflict, you prioritize expression, reassurance, and assertion.

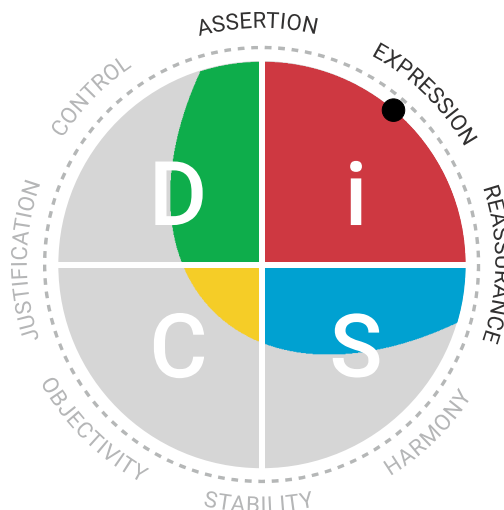
As someone with the i style, you probably have a strong instinct to freely **express** your opinions, even when things get tense. Because you're generally enthusiastic, you tend to focus more on the positive than the negative and stay optimistic about finding a resolution during conflict. However, because you have strong feelings about your ideas, you may become overly expressive as things escalate, lashing out with powerful emotions. At times, your feelings may trump objective facts, leading you to become a bit dramatic or to exaggerate the problem.

Most likely, you value working closely with others and enjoy opportunities to collaborate with your coworkers. As such, after disagreements, you probably tend to look for **reassurance** from others; similarly, you reciprocate—ensuring that others know that the relationship is okay. As a way to keep relationships positive, you may have a tendency to gloss over problems during conflict. Alternatively, you may be prone to tell others about any tense situations that arise, which allows you to process your feelings while connecting with people in your social circle. Getting others to support your side of the story also helps you feel justified in your view of the situation.

Similar to others with the i style, you're comfortable **asserting** your own opinions, even if they are contrary to someone else's. And even though you're usually accepting of others' points of view, if a disagreement devolves to the point where you feel hurt or defensive, you may try to take a stand by engaging in behaviors like excluding the person from your social circle or even openly holding grudges. On the flip side, however, you're also assertive in going out of your way to make people feel comfortable, defending others when you perceive injustices and finding ways to get over the awkwardness that can result from tense situations.

Usually, you're anxious to keep moving and willing to jump headfirst into projects and new ideas. This tendency, coupled with your inclinations to verbalize strong emotions and maintain relationships, may create issues for you during conflict. On one hand, you may want to dismiss conflict to try to preserve relationships that are important to you and to keep moving forward. But, at the same time, your need to express your emotions and your willingness to jump into situations without reservation may lead you to instinctively react without thinking about the impact.

While conflict can be uncomfortable and unwanted, it can help solve problems, as long as everyone feels heard and issues are resolved in a healthy way. When used constructively, your ability to express and assert your opinions, ideas, and emotions as well as the value you place on social interactions and providing others with reassurance can be great assets in resolving conflict.



Your dot location is near the edge of the circle, so you probably relate well to the characteristics associated with the i style.

1 Part One

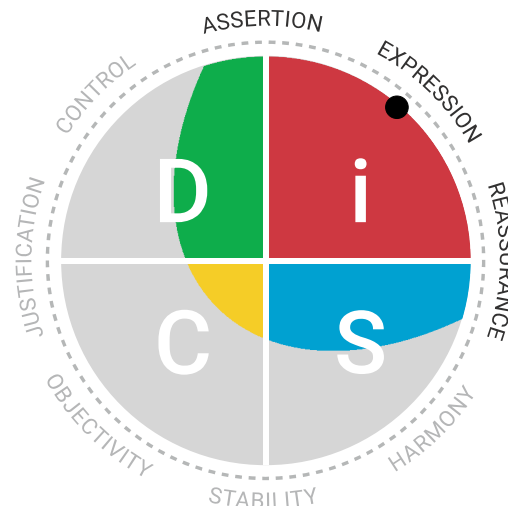
Your DiSC® Style in Conflict

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU DURING CONFLICT?

Different people find different aspects of conflict to be most significant. For instance, like other people with the *i* style, when you're passionate about an issue, you'll assert your opinions, making sure you're heard. But you also want to be understood, so you fully express where you're coming from. And because you care so much about relationships, giving and receiving reassurance is very important to you, especially after the dust has settled.

You may value many of the following approaches during conflict:

- Letting others know the relationship is okay
- Showing empathy
- Being known as the peacemaker
- Saying what's on your mind
- Standing up for what you think is right
- Getting people to open up
- Telling people when you're feeling hurt or upset
- Expressing yourself
- Maintaining warm relationships



WHAT DRAINS YOUR ENERGY DURING CONFLICT?

Then there are also those aspects of conflict that are particularly stressful for you. Because it's important to you to feel heard, it may upset you if you think people aren't listening to you or don't understand where you're coming from. Consequently, you may spin exaggerated versions of what really happened to get people to realize the gravity of what you're saying. And, if you feel attacked, you may interrupt to defend yourself or lash out emotionally.

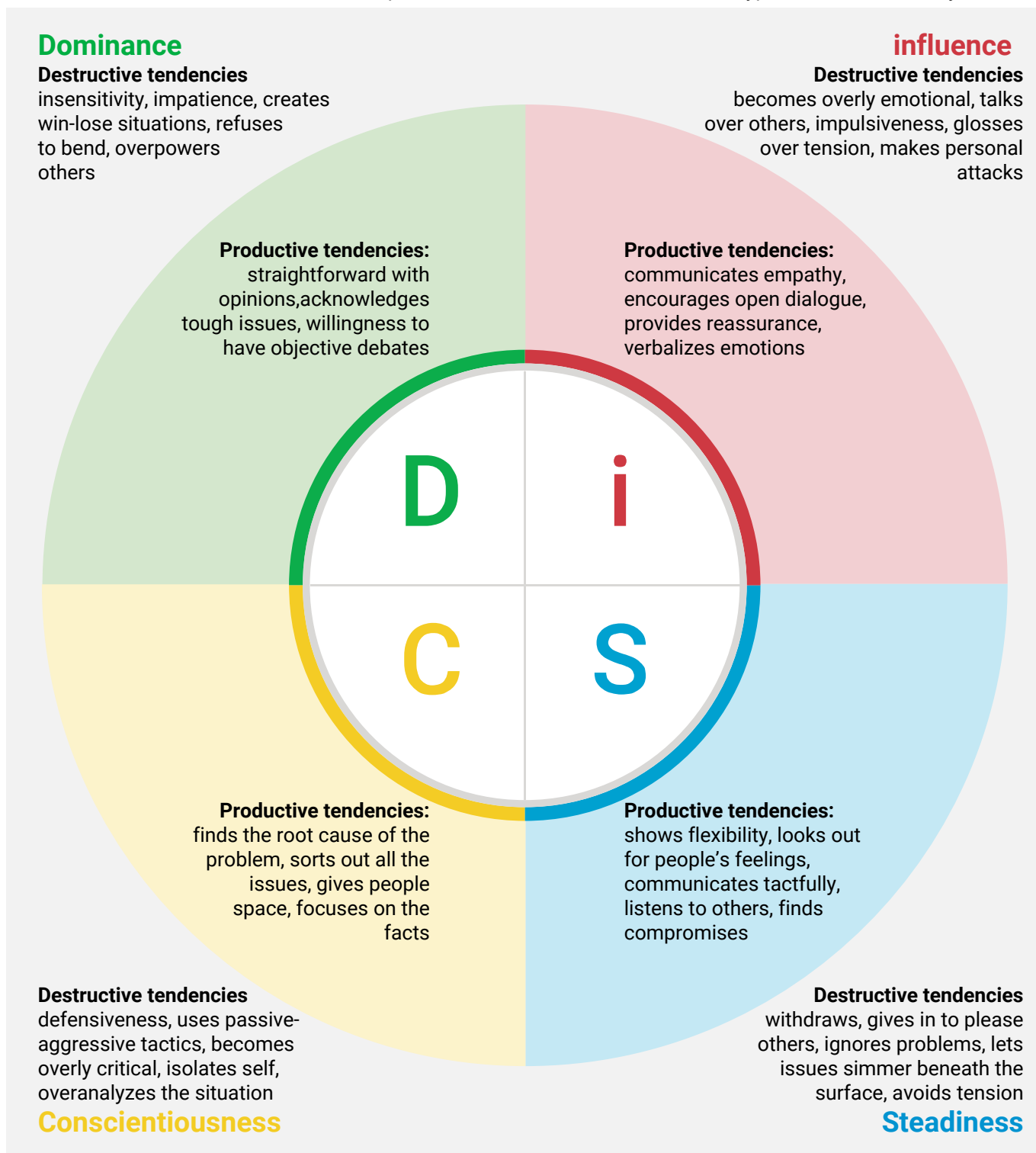
Many of the following approaches or behaviors may be stressful for you during conflict:

- Giving people unpleasant feedback
- Having to be strict or stern with others
- Feeling misunderstood
- Not knowing what people are thinking or keeping to themselves
- Being unable to speak your mind or defend yourself
- Not being given the benefit of the doubt
- Dealing with people who lack empathy
- Being forced to weigh facts over feelings
- Having to stay objective when evaluating the situation

1 Part One

Overview of DiSC[®] in Conflict

Just like DiSC[®] can help you understand how you handle conflict, it can also help you understand others. The overview below shows the destructive and productive conflict tendencies that are typical for each DiSC style.



1 Part One

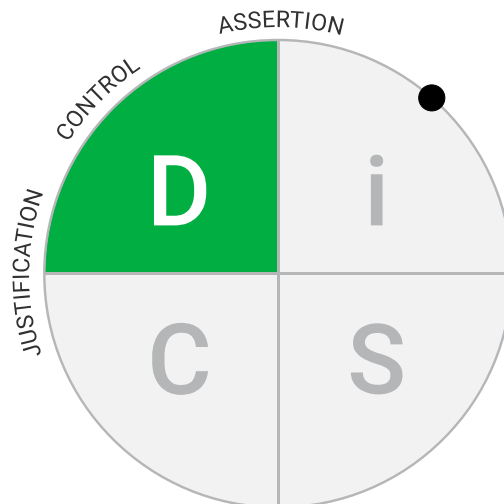
Conflict with the D Style

WHAT DRIVES THE D STYLE IN CONFLICT?

Imagine you're entangled in a conflict with someone who has the D style and places a priority on having **control**. She cuts right to the chase and pushes really strongly for her opinions. Since she wants to stay in charge of the discussion, she has no problem interrupting or talking over you, which you may find to be harsh or insensitive.

Like you, this individual tends to **assert** herself during conflict. When she sees a problem, she's not afraid to tackle it head-on. She doesn't spend a lot of time hemming and hawing over what should be said or done—she just takes care of it. You usually aren't afraid to address tough issues either, but you probably do so with more empathy and consideration.

Furthermore, you may observe that she seems more interested in **justifying** her point of view than you are. She is good at logically dissecting and dismantling arguments, so she's unlikely to accept your side of the story at face value. She may ask pointed questions or easily express disbelief. You tend to be accepting and optimistic, so to you, her behavior may seem impatient or even rude.



COMPARED TO YOU

Compared to you, people with the D style tend to be:

- More prone to take control of the discussion
- More likely to question others' conclusions
- Similarly likely to be bold and dynamic
- Just as likely to speak up with opinions
- Less worried about harming relationships
- Less likely to talk about feelings

HOW CAN YOU HAVE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE D STYLE?

Your "D" coworkers tend to be very direct and opinionated, often saying exactly what's on their minds. While they may appreciate knowing where you stand, your emphasis on self-expression and feelings may not always go over well with them. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the D style, consider the following:

- Don't bury real issues with artificial optimism.
- Realize that they respect honesty and frankness.
- Remember that they are less sensitive than you are.

1 Part One

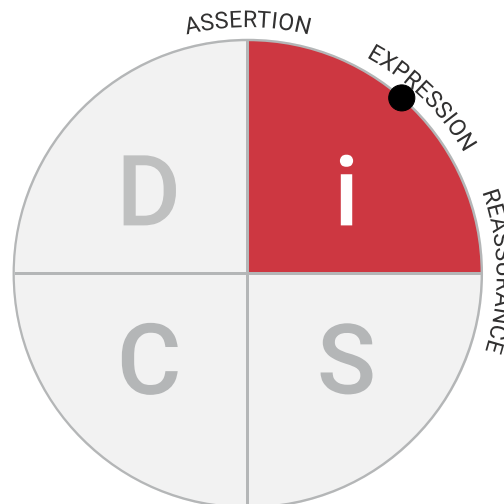
Conflict with the i Style

WHAT DRIVES THE i STYLE IN CONFLICT?

Now, imagine you are in a conflict with someone who has an i style. He does his best to keep things friendly and upbeat. But if things get tense, he feels, like you, that it's important to be able to **express** his honest thoughts and feelings, and you both may insist on being heard. If things escalate, you may say harsh things to each other that are difficult to take back.

Furthermore, you likely share his accepting and warm nature. Because being well-liked and on good terms is important to both of you, you'll want **reassurance** during or after the conflict that your relationship is still okay. You're likely to empathize with each other and will probably go out of your way to forgive the other's behavior, making obvious amends to keep your relationship strong.

Like you, this individual tends to easily **assert** his opinions during disagreements. He tends to be confident and optimistic about his perspectives and willing to share what's on his mind. In this way, the two of you are likely to be up-front about tough issues. However, you both may overlook parts of the argument that seem too complex or drawn-out, even if they sorely need attention.



COMPARED TO YOU

Compared to you, people with the i style tend to be:

- Just as concerned about interpersonal turmoil
- Similarly likely to let frustration show
- Just as likely to strongly assert opinions
- Similarly optimistic
- Just as likely to verbalize thoughts and emotions
- Equally empathetic

HOW CAN YOU HAVE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE i STYLE?

You and other people with the i style may find it natural to openly express your thoughts and opinions. However, when things get heated, your shared tendency to speak impulsively may lead you to say things that you later regret. Therefore, to have productive conflict with others who have the i style, consider the following:

- Show them that you care about where they are coming from.
- If you see emotions escalating between the two of you, suggest a time-out.
- Give them reassurance when things become difficult.

1 Part One

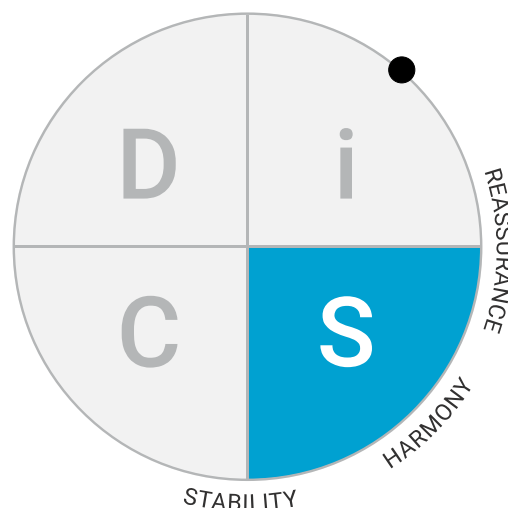
Conflict with the S Style

WHAT DRIVES THE S STYLE IN CONFLICT?

Now, imagine you're in conflict with someone who has the S style. He prioritizes **harmony** and wants everyone to get along. You also prefer for things to stay upbeat and friendly, but, at the same time, you have a strong need to express your honest opinions. If this sparks a disagreement, he will likely cave in quickly, even if he doesn't really agree with what you say.

You probably notice that he makes attempts to smooth things over with you during and after conflict. This is because providing and receiving **reassurance** is important to him, as it is with you. Therefore, you both tend to give ample attention to mending your relationship and making sure things are okay between the two of you.

Furthermore, he prioritizes **stability**, so when tension arises, he may want to return things to normal as soon as possible. He isn't comfortable with the unknowns inherent in conflict—both in the altercation itself and the outcomes it brings. While you dislike conflict as well, you tend to be spontaneous and comfortable speaking off the cuff, so the unknown in conflict does little to unnerve you.



COMPARED TO YOU

Compared to you, people with the S style tend to be:

- More likely to listen than speak
- More focused on remaining calm
- Just as worried about hurting people's feelings
- Equally concerned about people's emotional needs
- Less likely to bring up touchy subjects
- Less enthusiastic and expressive

HOW CAN YOU HAVE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE S STYLE?

People with the S style want to be agreeable and cooperative. Though you may try, it may be difficult at times for you to draw them out, especially if they think their opinions will cause tension or disagreement. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the S style, consider the following:

- Give them ample time and space to express themselves.
- Remain tactful and diplomatic even if the conflict escalates.
- Encourage them to discuss their ideas.

1 Part One

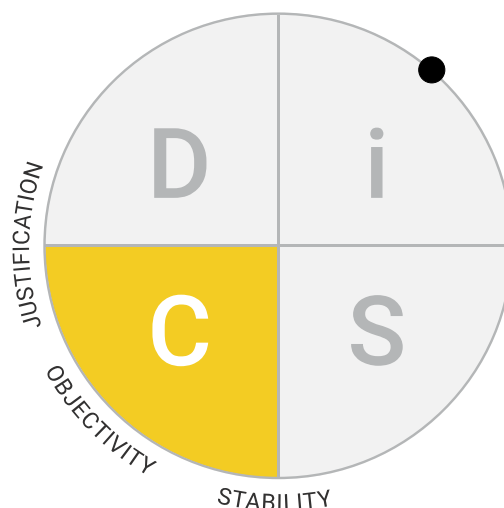
Conflict with the C Style

WHAT DRIVES THE C STYLE IN CONFLICT?

Finally, imagine you're in conflict with someone who has the C style and places a priority on staying **objective**. You may notice that she keeps emotions out of the discussion and tends to stick to the facts instead. Conversely, you often base arguments on what feels right to you. She may continue to reason logically with you unless you become emotional or dramatic, and then she'll likely withdraw.

At the same time, this individual tends to **justify** her claims and dig for answers rather than just accept other people's arguments at face value. She prides herself on her critical-thinking skills and may ignore your attempts to give her friendly reassurances. Instead, she wants to keep emotions out of the discussion and give clear explanations.

This individual also prizes **stability**, so she does her best to avoid the unpredictability of conflict. During a disagreement, she may concede, even if she doesn't think she's wrong in her way of thinking, simply to calm the waters. This is especially likely to happen if you become defensive and lash out, since she tends to shrink from emotional displays.



COMPARED TO YOU

Compared to you, people with the C style tend to be:

- More likely to question others' motives
- More anxious about rocking the boat
- More analytical and logic-focused
- Less likely to let emotions influence arguments
- Less likely to rely on intuition or gut instinct
- Less worried about damage to relationships

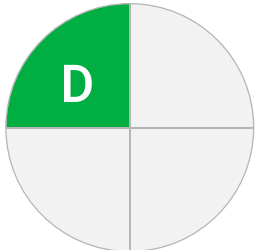
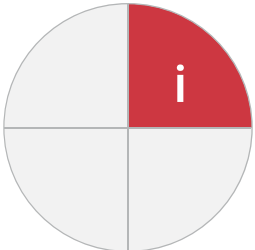
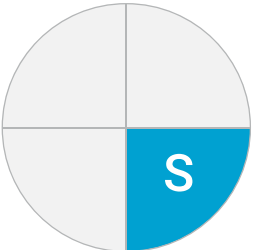
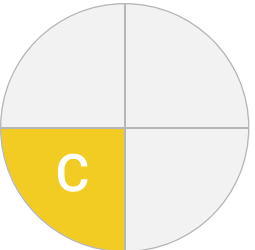












HOW CAN YOU HAVE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE C STYLE?

In conflict, people with the C style prefer to tell their side of the story in a controlled and objective way, while you have a strong need to express all your thoughts and feelings. At times, they may question your logic, which you may think is cold or inconsiderate. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the C style, consider the following:

- Remain calm and objective.
- Remember that emotional displays may cause them to retreat.
- Allow time to reflect and for tension to dissipate.

1 Part One

Summary of DiSC® in Conflict

D style in conflict	i style in conflict	S style in conflict	C style in conflict
			
Goals: Victory, results, personal accomplishment	Goals: Approval, understanding, openness	Goals: Agreement, acceptance, peace	Goals: Fairness, rational decisions, accuracy
Overuses: The need to win, impatience, bluntness	Overuses: Passion, impulsivity, outspokenness	Overuses: Passive resistance, compromise	Overuses: Restraint, analysis, rigidity
Fears: Being taken advantage of, appearing weak	Fears: Rejection, not being heard, disapproval	Fears: Letting people down, facing aggression	Fears: Being wrong, strong displays of emotion
  	  	  	  

REFLECTION

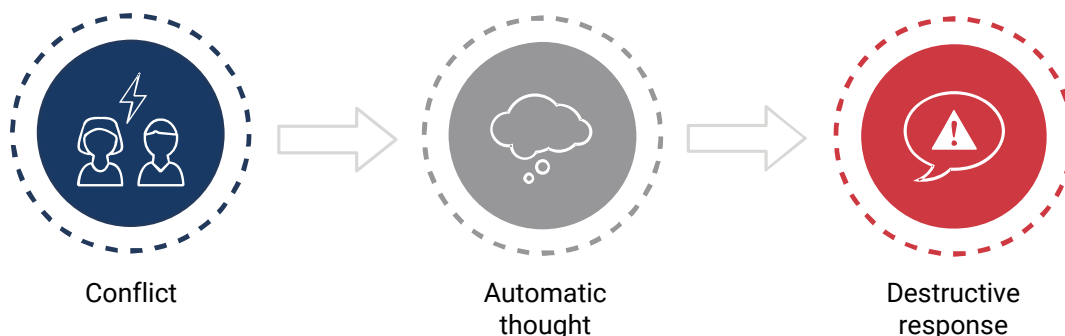
Think of a conflict situation you were in that you wish you would have handled better. Briefly describe it below.

What impact do you think your DiSC® style had on the situation?

2 Part Two

Destructive Responses

Now that you know more about DiSC® and conflict, let's look at why we sometimes respond destructively instead of productively to conflict. For most of us, conflict situations are threatening, and it's our instinct to protect ourselves. We may react so quickly that we don't even think about what we're doing. But beneath the surface, there's a process playing out: a conflict event triggers an automatic thought, which in turn triggers a destructive response.



WHAT ARE SOME COMMON DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES?

To change our responses in conflict, we need to recognize both the automatic thoughts that lead to the behaviors and the responses themselves. Let's start by looking at typical destructive behaviors.

- First, put a **checkmark in the circle** next to the three behaviors **others** do that bother you the most in conflict.
- Then, put a **star** next to the three behaviors that **you do most often** in conflict.

Note: You can learn more about these destructive responses on pages 12–18.

Arguing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gossiping/complaining about someone
Belittling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Becoming hypercritical
Caving in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Overpowering
Defensiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Passive-aggression
Dismissing others' opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Revenge/looking to even the score
Becoming overly dramatic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sabotage/introducing obstacles
Exaggerating the problem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sarcasm
Exclusion/leaving people out	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Stonewalling/becoming non-receptive
Finger-pointing/blaming/scapegoating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Withdrawing

2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

Destructive responses can range from immediate reactions in the heat of the moment to delayed or drawn-out responses that prolong the conflict. The following descriptions provide information about what's behind the behaviors listed on page 11, as well as some common automatic thoughts that might lead to each response.

ARGUING



Exchanging differing points of view in a heated or tense way

Arguing is unhealthy when it becomes about winning and losing, when the emphasis is no longer on getting at the truth or the best solution, when we try to protect our ego and put other people in their place. And so, like any competition, the “best” strategy is to give up as little ground as possible to your adversary. As a result, any chance for empathy goes out the window. Like others with the i style, you probably resort to arguing during conflict when you perceive an imbalance in the relationship, likely stemming from a belief that the other person isn’t fully listening to you. So, in the midst of an argument, one of the most important things you can do is be honest with yourself about your motivation. What emotions are fueling me right now? How much is this about winning?

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- There’s no way I’m backing down
- I don’t get it/you; I’m obviously right

BELITTLING



Making someone or something feel unimportant

Similar to others with the i style, you may occasionally be tempted to belittle others during conflict as a tactic to quickly and sharply express your frustrations. By belittling someone, we create a demeaning, one-dimensional caricature of them. Not only does this make it easier to dismiss their opinions, but it can feel extremely satisfying. The power of belittling often comes from putting a label on someone that sums up all of the negative attributes we want to call out. It channels all of the frustrations we have into a single powerful word. And once that succinct label is out there, we can use it to easily dismiss anything else the person has to say.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I’m going to make you look like a fool
- I’m going to show you that your idea doesn’t matter

2

Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

CAVING IN



Giving in to something after originally opposing it

Caving in can be particularly tempting because it often feels like the absolute quickest way to end a disagreement. Even though it typically means sacrificing our legitimate rights, the pain of being in a conflict can be so excruciating that we take immediate shelter in this option. Of course, this short-term gain is often at the expense of long-term satisfaction and can eventually create very unbalanced, unhealthy power dynamics within a relationship. Like others with the i style, when your emotions become seemingly unbearable during conflict, making it difficult to clearly express your opinions, you may be tempted to cave in to quickly get out of the situation.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I don't want to upset anyone
- Putting up a fight just isn't worth it

DEFENSIVENESS



Becoming anxious or protective in the face of criticism

When we trust that things will be okay no matter what the outcome of the conflict, there's no reason to be defensive. We can be open to different opinions. On the other hand, at the heart of defensiveness is insecurity. We don't want to admit failure or shortcomings. When our brain is telling us that the stakes are incredibly high, we cover up any vulnerabilities or weaknesses. And for the i style in particular, feelings of defensiveness may come naturally when you sense that someone is suggesting that you are being rude, inconsiderate, or selfish. Even when you do recognize your defensiveness, it can still be difficult to ask yourself what, beneath it all, you're really afraid of.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I shouldn't be blamed for this
- This isn't my fault

DISMISSING OPINIONS



Treating other people's views as unworthy or unimportant

Dismissing opinions is a blocking strategy to win an argument, but is also a common way to protect our ego. Like others with the i style, in some conflict situations you may be prone to dismissing others' opinions to ensure that your ideas are fully expressed and heard. It's also tempting to dismiss opinions when we're scared of the thoughts or views expressed by another person. We are afraid to give them space to paint a picture that we don't like. And because we feel challenged, insecure, or fearful, we adopt the strategy of overriding the other person. We exude absolute certainty in our position and effectively relieve ourselves of any obligation to hear the other side of the story. And by making the conversation as one-sided as possible, we feel empowered and righteous.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Nothing that anyone says will change my mind
- There's really no other way to think about this

2

Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

DRAMA



Displaying an over-the-top reaction to a situation

Melodrama may seem like a simple inability to rein in emotion, but it's often more than yelling or acting out. Given your need to express your thoughts and emotions, you, like others with the i style, may sometimes gravitate toward drama to call attention to something that's troubling you. Your natural response to internal chaos may be to process it out loud and have others acknowledge what you're feeling. And though what you share may, to some, come across as excessive, to you it may genuinely reflect your level of inner turmoil. You may find yourself becoming dramatic when it feels like others are keeping you from fully expressing yourself, or when you're seeking some measure of control in a situation where you otherwise feel powerless.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Everyone hates me!
- This situation is awful/hopeless

EXAGGERATING



Representing something as being worse than it really is

As someone with the i style, you may sometimes be tempted to exaggerate as a way to express the powerful whirl of emotions going on inside. You may omit those parts of the story that don't support your narrative, while overemphasizing the parts that make the other person look bad. Or you might turn to absolute terms like "always" or "never" to strengthen your case. Exaggeration can be a way of making the situation sound as awful as it feels. It can get others to notice and validate what you're experiencing. And to you, it may not always feel like exaggeration—it may seem like an accurate representation of the intensity of what you're going through.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to get your attention
- This needs to sound as bad as it feels

EXCLUSION



Deliberately leaving someone out

Like other people with the i style, you probably recognize just how valuable personal connections are in the workplace. Because of this, exclusion may feel like a particularly powerful way to subtly strike back at someone who's upset you. By alienating the other person from the group, this strategy not only hurts them emotionally, but is also a show of power. In fact, it's mostly likely to be used when we have greater social status than the other person. And once we've successfully excluded the other person, we can fully express our side of the story without it being contradicted or refuted. You may sometimes be tempted by this strategy because you recognize just how important it is to shape the way a group perceives a conflict situation.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Maybe you'll get the message if I don't invite you
- Leaving you out will prove that everyone's on my side

2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

FINGER-POINTING



Blaming someone for a particular situation or issue

As someone with the i style, in the heat of conflict, you may let your emotions get the best of you and, as a result, point the finger at others despite the impact on the relationship. Finger-pointing feels like a very aggressive behavior, but it usually stems from defensiveness. We're diverting attention away from our own shortcoming or failure by pointing it out in someone else. Often, we'll home in on one particular action of the other person that contributed to a problem. The goal is to make this action seem as awful as possible, to make it seem like the *heart* of the problem. As a result, our contributions don't seem nearly as bad. By shifting the blame, we've saved our reputation in the short term, but may have also unwittingly damaged our integrity.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I shouldn't get in trouble for this...it's all their fault
- This is because of you, not me

GOSSIPING



Engaging in idle talk about someone else's private affairs

Gossiping can feel good for a lot of reasons. First of all, venting frustrations can be cathartic. Not to mention, it can be deeply satisfying to have a go at someone who has hurt you. Because you, with your i style, tend to be naturally expressive, you may sometimes turn to gossip to share what you're going through and get reassurance from others that you're in the right during a conflict. But gossip is also about power. Since you probably have a good grasp of the social dynamics in your group, you may find gossip helps rally people to your side by shaping how they perceive the conflict. You gain control over a situation by getting your version out into the world first and most convincingly.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to tell everyone what so-and-so did to me
- I probably shouldn't say anything, but they deserve it

HYPERCRITICISM



Becoming overly judgmental about someone else's work or actions

Hypercriticism is often an attempt to get back at someone. We decide that we'll make a point of objecting to as much about the person as possible. We shoot down their suggestions. We find holes in their logic. We scrutinize their output for mistakes. Basically, we try to punish the person. It's a strategy that's particularly appealing when we recognize that the thing we're *actually* mad about is a little on the petty side. We know we can't complain about it directly. And so, becoming hypercritical is a way of acting on our anger without having to admit that we're really angry. Like others with the i style, although you're usually more reassuring with people, you may become hypercritical as a way to subtly express your frustration.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to knock you down a peg or two
- I need to look like the smartest one here

2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

OVERPOWERING



Overwhelming others with superior force

Overpowering involves drawing on all the sources of power at our disposal to defeat someone during a conflict. Sometimes that power is social or organizational authority, but sometimes it's simply using the force of a strong, vocal personality. For instance, your i style naturally tends to be very animated and dynamic, and this can be used as a way to control the direction of a tense conversation. Overpowering deliberately keeps others off balance and attempts to eliminate the possibility of a fair, even-handed discussion. This strategy is particularly tempting when we are overcome by a strong, almost primal, urge to “win” the conflict.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I won't quit until I win; I don't care what it takes
- I'll use intimidation to get my way

PASSIVE-AGGRESSION



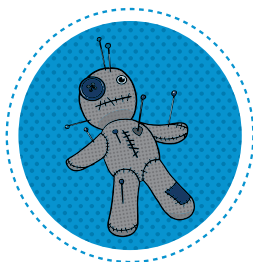
Expressing negative feelings in a subtle or indirect way

We can all think of occasions when we desperately wanted to express anger at someone, but didn't want a full-scale conflict. Passive-aggression can feel like the perfect solution. We get to subtly punish someone—enough that they notice, but not so much that they can call us on it. Its many forms (e.g., ignoring, eye-rolling, nit-picking) make it endlessly flexible. Given your i style, this conflict strategy might be tempting because it balances two strong, sometimes opposing needs: the need to express yourself and the need to avoid outright friction. Passive-aggression can do both. It can also be used to bother someone enough that they initiate a confrontation, which invites us to let loose. But whatever the end goal, we may take more satisfaction from it than we care to admit.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to make my point without looking like the bad guy
- I don't want to talk about it, but I can't act like nothing happened

REVENGE



Looking to even the score or get retribution for a wrongdoing

Revenge in the workplace is usually fairly subtle, but we do it to restore justice and/or reassert ourselves. And even though taking revenge is technically an external action, it's usually the end result of some pretty deep internal rumination. We stew over being hurt or mistreated, and fantasizing about getting even can feel good—even if we don't like to admit it. Of course, acting on those fantasies takes things to a whole different level. Most of us recognize that overt revenge won't be tolerated, but this still leaves plenty of creative, backhanded, and petty ways to inflict damage on someone. Of course, given that people with the i style tend to be empathic and cheerful, revenge might only start to seem like a viable option when your judgment has been clouded by some very strong emotions.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to get even
- You're going to regret what you did to me

2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

SABOTAGE



Deliberately obstructing or destroying someone's work

Sabotage is about making sure someone else fails. It can be social in nature (e.g., lying, spreading rumors) or can actually involve physical tampering. Sometimes we choose this extreme path when we lack the power to truly confront the other person and sometimes it's simply because we want to express our anger without a direct clash. Either way, there is usually a satisfaction in seeing the other person fail. Ultimately, sabotage usually requires us to suspend our normal understanding of right and wrong so that we can rationalize a behavior that, under normal circumstances, we would find reprehensible. And while sabotaging is an atypical response for people with the i style, when used, it's likely a last-resort behavior to express your anger.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- You should be punished for what you did to me
- I have to regain the upper hand

SARCASM



Ridiculing someone using mockery or derision

In conflict, sarcasm is a close cousin to passive-aggression. It allows us to take a shot at someone or express our hostility without being too obvious about our real motivations. It's for when we're not quite committed enough to yell at someone, but still want to take them down a peg or two. And sarcasm is such a tempting tool in the midst of conflict because we can always claim that "I'm just joking...seriously, lighten up." In particular, we may feel like the "just kidding" excuse gives us immunity after subtly attacking or demeaning someone. And given your i style, sarcasm may actually be a form of restraint. You may be tempted to use it when you want to say something aggressive but worry it could cause some long-term damage in the relationship.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- That idea is obviously ridiculous
- Why would anyone say something so stupid?

2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

STONEWALLING



Refusing to answer, show emotion, or respond to someone

Given your i style, stonewalling may be most tempting when you've become flustered or exhausted in an argument and just can't see any path to resolving things. By stonewalling, we make it clear to the other person that communication is completely shut down. We deliberately let them know that their behavior is so unacceptable that we are unwilling to compromise or even discuss a resolution. And although we may hate to admit it, stonewalling can be gratifying. We get to punish the other person while telling ourselves that our behavior is strong and dignified. And, as a bonus, we don't have to wade through the untidiness of conflict. Therefore, this can become a self-preservation strategy when we feel overwhelmed by a swirl of uncomfortable emotions.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- You don't get to know what I'm feeling
- I'm not responding to this

WITHDRAWING



Drawing back or removing oneself from a situation

Not many people actually enjoy conflict, but it is much more painful to some of us than others. We may not even know why conflict is so uncomfortable; we just know that it feels like a whirling jumble of anxiety, anger, insecurity, and danger. Every instinct is urging us to return to stability and safety. Withdrawing or clamming up can provide immediate relief by simply shutting out the emotional messiness. Given your i style, withdrawing from conflict may be a natural response when you've reached a certain level of frustration, perhaps feeling that your voice is not being heard or respected. Of course, this means you don't get to assert your own side of things. But in the moment, deliberately engaging in a conflict can feel overwhelming.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- This needs to end as soon as possible
- I'm just going to stay quiet until this thing is over

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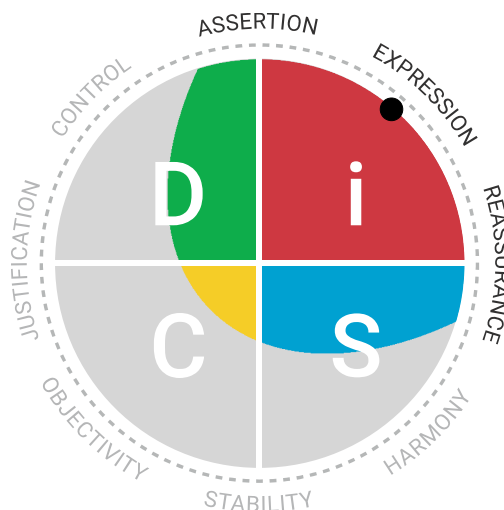
2 Part Two

Recognizing Automatic Thoughts

YOUR i STYLE AND AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Patti, like others with the i style, you may find some common themes shaping your automatic thoughts, such as protecting your relationships, expressing yourself, and being understood. Take a look at the list below. When you find yourself tempted toward a destructive reaction, which (if any) of the following automatic thoughts do you sometimes find going through your head?

- I can't stand it when people don't get where I'm coming from.
- I have to make sure you completely and quickly see my side of this.
- I can't come off as the bad guy.
- It's awful when someone's mad at me.
- You don't care about or value me.
- You're not hearing a word I'm saying.
- You always do this.
- If we fight, that person will never see me the same way.
- I have to say what's on my mind right away.
- I can't stand it when people don't really hear me.
- You obviously have no interest in understanding my point of view.



REFLECTION

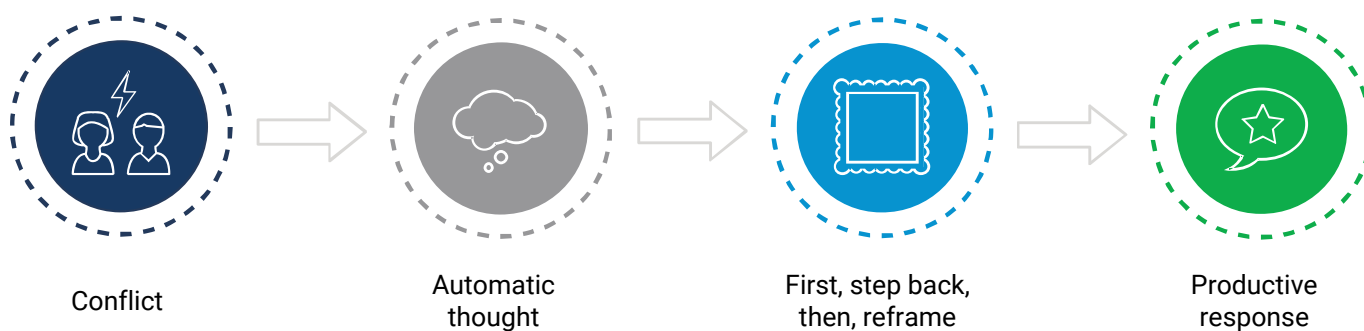
Think back to the conflict situation you described on page 10. What were some automatic thoughts you had?

What was your response to the situation? How did your automatic thoughts influence that response?

3 Part Three

Changing Your Response

If automatic thoughts can lead to knee-jerk responses, how do we change our behaviors? As shown in the diagram below, the trick is to disrupt this process—to stop our automatic thoughts before they push us toward a destructive response. If we can **step back** from the automatic thought and the emotions around it, we can then **reframe** it. Doing so will put us back in control, so we can choose a more productive path forward.



STEPPING BACK FROM YOUR EMOTIONS

It's tough to step back in the midst of a conflict, but it becomes easier if we first acknowledge our emotions and how they might influence our judgment. During conflict, our emotions can sometimes cloud our perspective and hinder our ability to make choices that are healthy and in our long-term best interests. Many of the emotions at play during conflict fall into two broad categories: **anger** and **anxiety**. Patti, your *i* style can give some key insights into how these two emotions may affect you.

Anger and your *i* style

Anger: frustration, resentment, outrage, aggression

Anger is a normal response to feeling provoked or hurt. But in its unhealthy form, it can cause us to blow things out of proportion or lash out at others. As someone with an *i* style, you may be particularly prone to hurt feelings when you believe someone has wronged you. After a while, you may start to feel affronted that the other person would put you through this whole ordeal in the first place. "If you really cared about me, how could you do this to me?!" And, like others with the *i* style, you may find that your anger about one aspect of your life bleeds into another. Stepping back may mean reining in your emotions and understanding that other people may process and handle conflict differently than you do.

Anxiety and your *i* style

Anxiety: fear, panic, worry, upheaval, disorientation

For people with the *i* style, conflict may cause a swirl of emotion that can be overwhelming and distressing, particularly when it comes to relationships. Feeling anxious can sometimes lead to misperceptions or catastrophizing. "Are they excluding me? Are they gossiping about what happened? Will the relationship ever be the same?" As you become more and more distraught, it may be difficult for you to escape the weight of your worry or concerns. Stepping back may be about acknowledging how you are feeling and having confidence that you *will* be able to sort it all out, even if it takes some time.

3 Part Three

Changing Your Response

ARE YOU SURE?

Once we're able to step back from any anger or anxiety that may be driving our automatic thoughts, the next step is to **reframe**—to change the way we think about the situation. The following questions can help us in this process.

1. Is this thought actually valid/true?
2. Am I overreacting or exaggerating the problem?
3. Is there another way I could look at the situation?

REFRAMING YOUR AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Patti, because you have the i style, you tend to be able to easily express your thoughts and where you're coming from. However, in the heat of the moment, your emotions might take over, and the situation may feel more dire and extreme to you than it actually is. Once you've stepped back, you'll need to challenge yourself to rein in your intense feelings and re-evaluate the situation. Below are two **examples** of automatic thoughts that are common for your i style and ways to reframe them.

Automatic thought: I have to make sure you completely and quickly see my side of this.

Reframed thought: I should wait until I'm calm to say something.

Automatic thought: If we fight, this person will never see me the same way.

Reframed thought: It's okay...disagreeing is part of figuring things out.

Thinking about your own experiences, **choose two automatic thoughts** that resonate with you. (For reference, you may want to look back at the "Why Do I Do This?" section on pages 12–18 or the list of automatic thoughts and the Reflection activity on page 19.) Like in the examples above, come up with a way to reframe each automatic thought. Is there another way you could think about it?

Automatic thought:

Reframed thought:

Automatic thought:

Reframed thought:

















3

Part Three

Choosing Productive Responses

Once you have reframed your automatic thought, you can choose to respond in a more productive way. There are many different ways to respond productively to conflict, and some behaviors are probably easier for you than others. Given your i style, you may find, for example, that acknowledging others' feelings comes more naturally to you than stepping back to reflect. Take a moment to rate how easy each behavior listed below is for you. This can help you identify behaviors you'd like to work on as well as productive responses you can call on during future conflicts.

On each continuum, plot how easy or difficult each productive response is for you.

<i>Easy</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Easy</i>	<i>Difficult</i>
Apologizing		Finding compromises	
Determining the root of the problem		Communicating openly and honestly	
Stepping back to reflect		Separating emotions from facts	
Taking ownership of your part in the situation		Showing flexibility	
Giving people time and space		Revisiting unresolved issues	
Acknowledging others' feelings		Communicating respectfully	
Seeking active resolution		Introspecting/being aware of your feelings	
Giving reassurance		Listening	

REFLECTION

Think back again to your conflict situation from page 10 and the automatic response you described on page 19. How could you reframe your automatic thought(s)?

With your new way of thinking, what productive response might you have chosen? (Refer to the list above or choose a different productive response.) How would that response have changed the conflict?

Hey! You're not done yet.

It may be tempting to ignore this page, but getting better at productive conflict takes time and continuous practice. Use this page to log and reflect on the next conflicts you have. Learning to step back and reframe your thoughts will ultimately help you have more productive conflict in the workplace.

1 Briefly describe your conflict situation.

2 What were your automatic thoughts? What was your response?

3 How did you reframe your automatic thoughts? Could you have done better?

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2 What were your automatic thoughts? What was your response?

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