

Emotional conflict results from feelings of anger and distrust, as well as personality clashes.

Avoidance pretends that a conflict doesn't really exist.

Accommodation, or smoothing, plays down differences and highlights similarities.

Competition, or authoritative command, uses force and domination to win a conflict.

Compromise occurs when each party gives up something of value to the other.

Collaboration, or problem solving, works through differences so everyone wins.

Conflict resolution is the removal of substantive or emotional causes of a conflict.

over such things as goals and tasks, the allocation of resources, the distribution of rewards, policies and procedures, and job assignments. **Emotional conflict** results from feelings of anger, distrust, dislike, fear, and resentment as well as relationship problems. You know this form of conflict as a clash of personalities or emotions—when you don't want to agree with another person just because you don't like them or are angry about something they have done.

With all this potential for conflict in and around teams, how do you and others deal with it? Most people respond to conflict through different combinations of cooperative and assertive behaviors.⁵⁵ **Figure 13.7** shows how they display five conflict management styles—avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration.⁵⁶

In **avoidance**, everyone withdraws and pretends that conflict doesn't really exist, hoping that it will simply go away. In **accommodation**, peaceful coexistence is the goal. Differences are played down and areas of agreement are highlighted. Both avoidance and accommodation are forms of *lose-lose conflict*. No one achieves what they want and the underlying conflict remains unresolved, often to recur in the future.

In **competition**, one party wins through superior skill or outright domination. It occurs as authoritative command by team leaders and as railroading or minority domination by team members. In **compromise**, trade-offs are made, with each party giving up and gaining something of value. Both competition and compromise are forms of *win-lose conflict*. Each party strives to gain at the other's expense. But whenever one party loses something, seeds for future conflict remain in place.

In **collaboration** both parties try to address the problem and resolve their differences. As you would expect, it is often time-consuming and stressful. But it's also the most effective style in terms of real conflict resolution. Collaboration turns a difficult situation into a *win-win conflict* that creates positive conditions for future teamwork.

From experience, you should recognize that this approach depends on the willingness of everyone to dig in, confront the issues, and openly and honestly discuss them.

It's important to point out that each of the five conflict management styles can be useful.⁵⁷ Most of us probably use each style at least some of the time. But the question is, are we using them at the right times?

Some suggestions for making good choices about when to use various conflict management strategies are shown in the box. It's worth remembering that unresolved or suppressed conflicts often sow the seeds for future conflicts. Only true **conflict resolution**, characteristic of the collaborative style, eliminates the underlying causes of a conflict in ways that are constructive for future relationships and teamwork.

When to Use Alternative Conflict Management Strategies

- *Collaboration or problem solving*—use for true conflict resolution when time and cost permit.
- *Avoidance or withdrawal*—use when more important issues are pressing or when "cooling off" time is needed.
- *Competition or authoritative command*—use for quick decisions or when unpopular actions must be taken.
- *Accommodation or smoothing*—use when issues are more important to others or to build "credits" for future use.
- *Compromise*—use to temporarily settle complex issues or gain quick solutions when time is limited.

FIGURE 13.7
What Are the Five Common Styles of Conflict Management?

A combination of cooperative and aggressive behaviors results in five conflict management styles. Competition occurs when aggression dominates and accommodation occurs when cooperation dominates. Avoidance occurs with both low aggression and cooperation and compromise occurs with moderate amounts of both. True collaboration or problem solving is more likely when both cooperation and aggression are high.

