

Contentious Communication

Center for Achievement in Public Service

Please take a few moments to complete this Self-Assessment before class. *Thank you!*

Contentious Communication Self-Assessment

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements. Choose one number from the scale below for each numbered statement.

0 Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Neutral 3 Agree 4 Strongly Agree

1. I view challenging conversations as opportunities to improve things. _____
 2. I hardly ever think more people should have common sense. _____
 3. It is easy for me to explain things to others in more than one way. _____
 4. I like when there are multiple ways to explain the same thing. _____
 5. I like working on a problem with others. _____
 6. Other people rarely take what I say the “wrong way.” _____
 7. Other people rarely tell me that I took what they said the “wrong way.” _____
 8. I think most people have a good head on their shoulders. _____
 9. I prefer to learn new information when it is presented by someone else. _____
 10. I think it is valuable when someone else helps me learn something new. _____
- Total:** _____

This ends the Self-Assessment. The remainder of this document is for use in class.

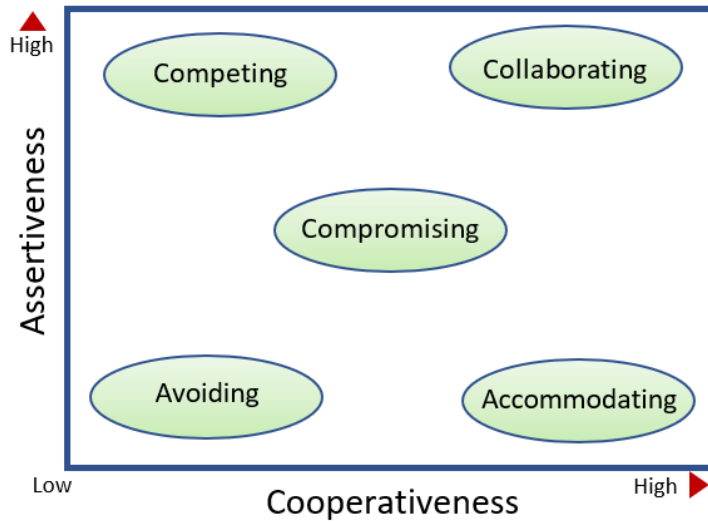
Component	Questions	Definition
Problem-Solving	1, 5	These questions relate to the extent to which one views conversations as opportunities to solve problems in a collaborative way.
Perspective	3, 4	These questions relate to the extent to which one is able to see the same information from different perspectives.
Learning	9, 10	These questions relate to the extent to which one views learning as a collaborative effort.
Intent	6, 7	These questions relate to the extent to which one recognizes the need to balance communication intent with impact.
Attribution	2, 8	These questions relate to the extent to which one assumes the best in others.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model

Five modes of responding to conflict situations

Reference: Based upon *Kilmann Diagnostics*, <https://kilmanndiagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilman-conflict-mode-instrument-tki/>

Which conflict mode is most comfortable for you?



Conflict Mode	Looks Like	Sounds Like	Used When...
Competing – assertive and uncooperative	The person pursues their own concerns at the other person’s expense.	“I win, you lose.”	
Accommodating – unassertive and cooperative	The person neglects their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person.	“It’s OK, we’ll do it your way this time.”	
Avoiding – unassertive and uncooperative	The person neither pursues their own concerns nor those of the other person.	“I am not going to get into this issue right now.”	
Collaborating – both assertive and cooperative	The person attempts to work with others to find some solution that fully satisfies their mutual concerns.	“How can we help each other so we both get what we need?”	
Compromising – moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness	The person’s objective is to find an expedient, acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties.	“I’ll give up something if you give up something.”	

What are your Attitudes about Contentious Communication?

Emotional Intelligence for Better Communication

There are two key components for Emotional Intelligence

	What You See	What You Do
Personal Competence	Self-Awareness <i>What do I feel?</i>	Self-Management <i>What do I need or want?</i>
Social Competence	Social Awareness <i>What do others feel?</i>	Relationship Management <i>What do others want or need?</i>

Goals and Emotions

Reference: Clifford Nass, "The Man Who Lied to His Computer"

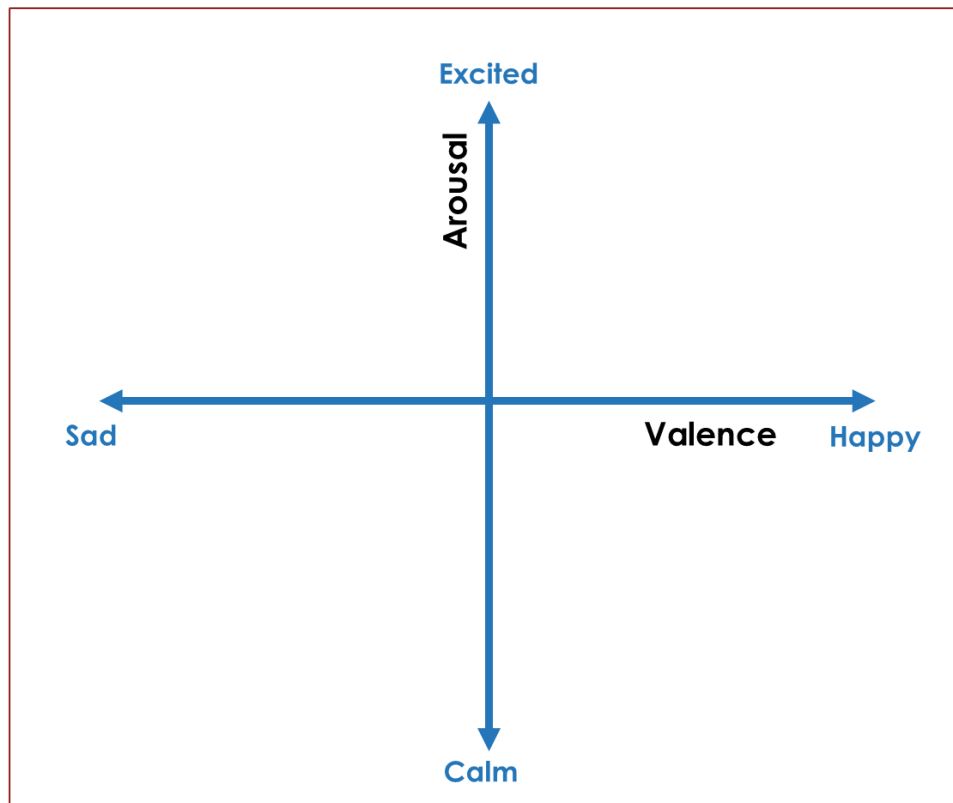
People in all cultures face every situation by asking themselves, both consciously and unconsciously, two questions:

1. How well am I meeting my goals? (How happy am I?)
2. Should I do something about my goals? (How excited am I?)

Question 1 is **Valence** or how happy or sad you are

Question 2 is **Arousal** or how vigorously you are trying to meet your goals.

- Angry
- Annoyed
- Bored
- Cheerful
- Delighted
- Depressed
- Ecstatic
- Enraged
- Frustrated
- Nervous
- Serene



De-escalate a Contentious Conversation

Clarity of Communication and Intentions

- Explain your purpose
- Describe the process
- State what you need and when you need it
- Tell people what will happen next

Personal Emotional Competence

Use self-management to become aware of your own goals, emotions, and reactions as they happen.

Remember MA!

Moments of Awareness

Wallet Card and Mobile Phone Reminder:
Print, cut, fold, and keep in your wallet.
Snap a photo and keep it on your phone.
Text it to a friend.



1. What's happening *right now*?
What am I... doing, feeling, thinking?
2. What do I want right now?
3. What am I doing to prevent what I want?
Say, "I choose to..."
4. Take a deep breath and move on.



Social Emotional Competence

Dr. Christian Conte **Three ways to de-escalate someone (7:55)** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qsfbCatgX8>

Use relationship-management to help others identify their goals and manage their emotions when situations become confrontational.

1. Validate goals and emotions
2. Help the person find options
3. Allow for choice