Trainers Guide to Successful

Conflict Styles Workshops

DIRECTING

COOPERATING

COMPROMISING

AVOIDING

HARMONIZING

Style MATTERS

Style MATTERS

Trainer's Guide to Successful Conflict Styles Workshops

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www.RiverhouseEpress.com

Contents

Download a free review copy of Style Matters at www.bit.ly/StyleMattersReview.

Download free Trainers Guide in PDF at www.bit.ly/trainersguide.

Download the free Trainers Guide to Online Training at www.bit.ly/TrainOnline2020

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide enables any group leader, whether novice or experienced as a trainer, to lead a workshop on conflict styles that deeply engages participants. It is keyed to *Style Matters: The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory* but works with other inventories as well, such as the *Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*, that are based on the Mouton Blake managerial grid.

If you're thinking about using online resources in your training, continue on to the section below, *Start with Basic Choices* . In this case, you will also want to also download the auxiliary Guide to Training with Style Matters Online.

If you are sure you will be doing only an in-person workshop on conflict styles, with the print version only of Style Matters and no use of online resources, you can go straight to the section titled *Workshop*.

Additional Resources

On the Riverhouse website (www.RiverhouseEpress.com) are useful resources including (click each to view):

- Free access to a 3 minute online slide show, Intro to Conflict Styles;
- Guide to Training with Style Matters Online, a 12 page supplement to the present guide for online work.
- Comparison of *Style Matters* to the *Thomas Kilmann inventory*
- History of *Style Matters*;
- Essay on culture and conflict styles;
- Annotated list of web resources on conflict style inventories.

About *Style Matters*

Style Matters is a *five styles of conflict* inventory designed for users from diverse backgrounds. Refined by Dr. Ron Kraybill in twenty years of experimentation in North America and abroad, *Style Matters* brings unique features into one affordable package:

- *Cultural adaptability*;
- *Measures stress response* to show behavior changes in high conflict;
- *Online tutorial* for solo learners;
- A *research-validated* questionnaire;
- *In-depth info* and *practical tips for each style*;
- *Discussion questions* for groups;
- *Trainer's Dashboard* for easy management of users.

Style Matters is based on the Mouton Blake Managerial Grid, as is the *Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* and Jay Hall's *Conflict Management Survey*. Transition from those instruments is easy for trainers.

Style Matters is available online for $7.95, in print for $8.95, and as low as $3.95 per user if you make your own copies. **Order here.**

START WITH BASIC CHOICES

Paper or Online Version?

Online. The online version of *Style Matters* provides automated scoring and a detailed score report tailored to the user's numbers. In addition, the online version of *Style Matters* provides an online tutorial for self-guided study that enables users to learn key concepts of conflict styles. Even an experienced trainer would have a hard time providing the depth and precision of suggestions generated for each user by the online algorithm.   Download the free Trainers Guide for the online version here.

Paper. The paper version sells as a 24 page booklet in print or color. Use it when online access is not available to users, or when you prefer the hands-on physicality of the print version.

Blend of online and paper. Many trainers take a blended approach by arranging for users to take the online version at home and bring the score report as a paper printout to class.   This gives the best of both worlds and has several benefits:

- It frees up 20 minutes of class time for input and discussion that would otherwise be required to hand out and administer the inventory;
- Users have the convenience of automated scoring;
- Users receive a detailed 8 page report with recommendations tailored precisely to the user;
- In class discussion, users get valuable additional perspectives from the trainer and their peers.

Order the *Style Matters* dashboard with a package for 10 online users here.

Time Requirements

This guide supports training in a variety of settings and time formats. I consider about two hours to be the "sweet spot" of time for conflict styles training. This is enough time for people to really feel they grasp the inventory and gain rich practical insights, even if the topics and exercises have not been exhausted.

If you've got more than 2 hours to work with, you can easily add more with ideas from the section, Workshop Start to Finish.

If you are squeezed for time, you can lead a bare-bones conflict styles

workshop in as short as an hour if you have people take the inventory on their own before the workshop, tally their scores and bring a print-out to class.

You can save additional class time if you have users work through the online tutorial so you don't have to give trainer inputs about core concepts. Then you can dedicate *all* group time to discussing scores and doing reflection exercises.

Options for Teaching Conflict Styles with *Style Matters*

Context of learning	SOLO	SOLO + DISCUSSION	SOLO + WORKSHOP	WORKSHOP Start to Finish
Description	Individuals take inventory and do interpretation on their own, using the online version with its self-directed	Individuals take inventory and do tutorial on their own and take part in followup discussion with trainer or group.	Users take inventory on their own and bring score report to class. Trainer gives input on conflict styles and leads discussion.	Users take inventory in class. Trainer gives input in conflict styles and leads session on interpreting scores.
Version of inventory required	Online version + tutorial	Online version + tutorial (see guide to facilitating page 28 of this guide)	Print or Online.	Print or Online.
Group facilitation skills required to lead	No	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
General Training skills required to lead	No	No	Moderate	Moderate to high.
Conflict styles expertise required to lead	No	No	No	Not necessary if you have extensive general training experience. If not, use other options.
Your role as learning guide	Coordinator. Arrange access to inventory and communicate with	Coordinator of arrangements and facilitator of discussion (see guide below)	Coordinator, facilitator, and trainer, supported by online resources.	Coordinator, facilitator, and trainer, without support of online resources.
Comments	This option requires no training or facilitation skills.	This is a good option if you want users to benefit from group discussion but don't feel ready to provide training input.	Trainers who use the online version and dashboard have option to delay user access to score report and send score report only to trainer.	

An individual can take the online version of the inventory and work through the online tutorial in 45-60 minutes. This gives a complete review of conflict styles and is useful as a standalone exercise. That said, conflict is a social experience and learners benefit greatly from opportunity to discuss and compare notes with others in a follow-up conversation or workshop.

Choose a Learning Strategy

Structured learning used to happen only in classrooms. But today's revolution in the technology of learning has changed everything. Individuals and groups can learn at their own pace, in their own environment. The chart below is designed to help you choose a learning strategy that matches your abilities and meets the needs of the people you want to work with, whether colleagues, supervisees, or consultees.

Take a look at the table on page 7. The option on the right is the traditional training strategy in which all aspects of learning take place in the training classroom. On the left is an option for individuals working completely alone without benefit of trainer support. Between them are options blending aspects of both approaches.

Where does your situation fit on this spectrum?

- *If you have no experience as a trainer or are working with participants remotely:* Use the first or second options.
- *If you are comfortable leading a discussion but not giving input:* Use Solo + Discussion.
- *If you are holding a training event and time is tight:* use Solo + Workshop and instruct users to bring a printout of their score report. Also, decide how far, if at all, you want users to proceed in the inventory on their own before class and communicate this clearly so users arrive in class with similar levels of preparation.
- *If you opt for the print version:* You can order booklets delivered to you or order and download a PDF file and rights to reproduce it.

After you've selected one of the four learning strategies below, go to the instructions for that strategy that follow in this guide.

SOLO LEARNING

Conflict is social, so learning about it is best in a social context. Still solo is a good option for these purposes:

- For improving general conflict awareness of individuals without committing group time to the learning experience.

- For a trainer or consultant who lacks the time or knowledge required to lead a learning experience in conflict styles.

- As preparation for a team involved in or about to enter a challenging task (not necessarily conflicted) with limited time for joint learning.

- For groups wanting to prepare for discussion of difficult topics, by providing members a common analytical framework and language for describing dynamics.

- For settings of tension where people are not yet ready for open discussion of issues and want a low-risk way of "breaking the ice".

To implement the *Solo Learning* option:

1. Decide how to get users to the inventory. Key questions here are who is making the purchase - you or the users, and the level of control you want to have over the user experience. Options:

   - *Users purchase individual access*. The trainer simply instructs users to go to www.RiverhouseEpress.com and purchase the online version. The site guides users to the inventory and instructions after purchase, so the entire process of taking the inventory and studying results can be self-directed.
   - *Trainer purchases Dashboard* access and, using the Dashboard, sends users invitations and login info. This option gives the trainer maximum control over the learning experience, including immediate direct access by trainer to score reports, ability to delay delivery of score report to users if desired, and ability to monitor exactly who and who has not taken the inventory. Trainers can send notices to an entire group, or to a sub-group, with a single click. Click here for demo and instructions for use of Dashboard.
   - *Trainer purchases Coupon Access* and send users an email with instructions. Coupon Access requires no trainer setup but provides less ability to control user experience than the Dashboard option. Click here for info about Coupon Access.

2. Communicate instructions to users based on your choice about the above. If you are using this in a setting where participants are colleagues, enthusiasm and learning will be higher if users participate in the decision to take the inventory. In this case your communication

of instructions should come as follow-up to previous discussion with those taking it.

3. Monitor to make sure individuals follow instructions.

4. Reinforce. After users have taken the inventory and participated in whatever learning events you have recommended, seek opportunities to reinforce learning from the experience in other communications.

   For example:

   ■ Make a point of talking about conflict style options during decision making or other meetings.

   ■ A respected leader or senior person in the organization could, in the presence of others, describe his or her own learnings from the conflict style inventory.

   ■ Two people or a team who have a track record of successfully working together could have a conversation in the presence of the group about their scores and insights related to conflict styles and their partnership.

SOLO PLUS DISCUSSION

Solo Plus Discussion is a two-stage training strategy. In the first stage, learners are on their own while taking the inventory and reviewing core concepts of conflict styles in the online tutorial. In the second stage, they have in-depth conversation with others about what they've learned. The approach is similar to the first option above, but with a greater investment in the follow-up discussion.

Since the core learning experience about conflict styles is done solo, this approach is great for facilitators who don't yet have experience as a trainer in conflict styles. The facilitator *is* deeply involved in the learning process in the second stage as a catalyst for reflection and discussion.

For guidance in the first stage about setting up this option and having users take the inventory, see the points in the Solo learning strategy section above.

For the second phase of followup discussion:

   ■ With *individuals*, the facilitator conducts one-on-one discussion in person, online, or via telephone.

- With a *group* of colleagues, the second phase will probably be a group discussion, face-to-face or online. If participants are not work colleagues and are simply co-participants in the discussion, the topic of discussion will be conflict styles in general. If participants are colleagues, the discussion can start with conflict styles broadly and then transition to experience among colleagues, with a goal of gaining insight that will improve decision-making and cooperation within the group.

Topics covered in these discussion could be many. See the section near the end of this manual, ***Discussion Ideas for Deepening Learning about Conflict Styles*** for ideas.

SOLO PLUS WORKSHOP

Like the *Solo Plus Discussion* approach above, this is a two stage approach in which learners first take the inventory on their own and use aspects of the online tutorial for self-directed learning. But in this approach the leader is more than a facilitator. He or she is also a trainer and gives inputs and on conflict styles and serves as an active trainer.

See the section *Solo* and use the guidance there for the first stage and the section, *Workshop,* for guidance regarding the second stage.

A critical choice for the trainer is the topics on which to provide trainer input. You must decide this early and give users clear instructions about how much independent study to do. For example, if you are planning to do a lot of training input in a workshop you might instruct users as follows:

Please take the inventory, print out and read your Score Report, and bring it to our class. Please also go to the tutorial section of the Riverhouse site and view the "Intro to Conflict Styles" slide show so you arrive at class with a basic understanding of the conflict styles framework.   I will provide input and discussion exercises in class to deepen your understanding of conflict styles, help you interpret your scores, and devise strategies for applying conflict styles awareness in relationships.

You would then need to plan for an hour or more of input and discussion about topics covered in the tutorial but not in the Intro to Conflict Styles slide show.

If class time is very limited you could ask users to work through the whole tutorial in advance, and design an hour of class time in which you: a) provide

input on interpreting scores and b) facilitate discussion in the whole group or in small groups with questions from the section below, ***Discussion Ideas for Deepening Learning about Conflict Styles.*** In this case you might send a note to the class as follows:

Please take the inventory, print out and read your Score Report, and bring it to our class. Please also go to the tutorial section *of the Riverhouse site and work through the various topics there so you have a good understanding of conflict styles. I will provide input in class on interpreting scores and set up discussion exercises to deepen your understanding of conflict styles, and give you insights from your scores and strategies for applying conflict styles in relationships.*

WORKSHOP START TO FINISH

The remainder of this guide lays out an entire workshop when all learning is done in a class, either face-to-face or online. The workshop starts with introducing the topic of conflict and administering the taking of the inventory and carries all the way through to the closing of the workshop. Few workshops will include all this content, of course. Pick and choose those elements that fit your situation.

Guidance to the trainer is in standard text font. Things suggested to say to the group are *in italics*.

Getting Started

Introduce the conflict style inventory

Suggested comments:

- *The bad news about conflict is that we can't escape it. Conflict is part of being human. Yet we don't teach how to deal with conflict. How many of you have had a course in conflict resolution? How many parents or couples get training in dealing with conflict? Teachers? Administrators? Religious leaders? Generally, none.*

- *The good news about conflict is that it can be a powerful motivator for change. In fact, no meaningful change takes place without at least some conflict. Anyone can learn a few basic tools for managing conflict. The goal is not to make conflict go away; the goal is to make conflict constructive rather than destructive.*

- *A conflict style inventory is one of the most widely-used tools for learning*

basic strategies of conflict management. The strategy is to learn by looking at our own typical responses to conflict. Tens of thousands of users have found the Style Matters inventory a useful roadmap for thinking about conflict.

Administer the inventory

If your strategy is to administer the inventory in class rather than previously, pass out the booklets now. Suggested comments:

- *This is not a "test". There are no right/wrong answers. Every person answers the questions differently.*

- *What you get at the end is a set of scores that describe your response to conflict. Some people are amazed at how accurately the scores describe them; others feel that the numbers don't fit. Either way it's fine - the goal is simply to get you thinking about your choices in conflict and you shouldn't worry too much about the numbers.*

- *Our goal is to make conscious choices about options and strategies in conflict. When we don't make conscious choices we respond from habit, from emotional reaction, from ignorance, or from prejudice. Only if we make conscious choices can we bring intelligence, creativity, and values into our responses. So this is a tool to help you start thinking, consciously, about your choices in conflict.*

As you speak, interact on a blackboard with a simple replica of the diagram on page 11 of the inventory.

Clear instructions are given on page 3 of the print version of *Style Matters*. Have people read them and raise questions if there are any, and begin. Study carefully the instructions to users on page 3 beforehand so you understand the difference between Instruction Set A and Set B. It is also a good idea to read Note 1 on page 22 beforehand, which elaborates on the difference between individualist and collectivist cultures. You can also read more here on our website.

Most people can take and score the test in fifteen minutes but a few will probably need twenty. Instructions are given for self-scoring on page 7. Additional guidance to give:

- As the first few people begin finishing with the questions, say: *When you are finished, go to page 7.*

- When some are finished with scoring, say: *If you are finished with scoring you may go on and read page 8. (It is fine for people to begin reading the interpretation while they wait for others to finish).*

Interpreting the Inventory

The instructions below follow the same learning sequence that is outlined for users in the Guidelines found on pages 8-10 of Style Matters. Each step below can be connected to one of the guidelines.

Set aside scores for a few minutes and introduce the idea of conflict styles. With the group, study the diagram on page 11 (or online here). A short slideshow presenting the concepts below can be viewed free or purchased for offline use from the Riverhouse website. (A somewhat expanded version of the same presentation is also available in Prezi at the same location. Prezi is like Powerpoint with motion and many viewers like the novel effect.)

Explain the Diagram

Let's first of all study the underlying logic of this inventory.

In any situation of conflict, there are two things going on.

One is that people have an agenda, that is, their own goals or expectations. Sometimes we don't care very much whether our own agenda is met and we are not assertive about it. But sometimes we care a lot and are very assertive. So the vertical axis shows this range, from low commitment to our own agenda to high commitment.

A second thing that is going on in any conflict: there is a relationship of some kind. Sometimes we are very committed to that relationship and our response communicates that to others. Other times we are not very committed to that relationship or at least in that moment we feel and act as though we don't care.

That might sound bad, but it is not always wrong – for example, if someone you will never see again flashes an insulting gesture at you on the highway, there is no point in trying to improve that relationship. Just get home safely and forget about it! Our goal cannot be to make everything perfect all the time; our goal is to make the best choices we can in the realities life brings us.

On the diagram, the relationship is charted on a horizontal line, showing that we may have a low focus on (or commitment to) the relationship or a high focus on the relationship.

So, when we put these two dynamics together in a diagram, we can identify five different styles of responding to conflict. The styles differ according to what we are focusing on in the moment of conflict: our own agenda, the relationship, or both.

We will look at these in detail in a few minutes.

A key goal is flexibility. *Each style has strengths and weaknesses. We manage conflict better when we are able to use each style well. The goal is flexibility so that we can use each style appropriately.*

Some of these styles might seem problematic at first glance. For example, the Director up here on the left says, "We're doing it my way." That doesn't sound so good, does it?   But if a child runs out into the street, we don't want a parent to smile like the Harmonizer down there on the right or be very quiet, like the Avoider on the lower left.   There is only one thing that matters in such a crisis: grab the child. Tears? Tantrums? Who cares - the priority is to save a life!

To function well in the roles and responsibilities of life, we need every one of these styles. Every style is needed in certain times and places.

The problem is that most of us get good at and favor one or two styles, and then we tend to rely on it for all circumstances.

We establish deep patterns when we are still children. In a family, maybe big brother learns that conflict is no problem – he just uses a Directing style and little brother falls into line.   It works great – until big brother gets married to a woman who doesn't Harmonize like little brother did. She wants to use a Cooperating style to work out differences and she gets angry when her husband always insists on things his way. Now he's in a life crisis! Can he adapt and grown and learn to use other styles as well?

That's the challenge for all of us. It doesn't matter which styles we prefer. Life is going to bring us conflict and we will get stuck if we try to use the same response in all situations. The challenge is to get skilled in all of the styles and be able to use each one when it is most effective.

Quick Intro to Each Style to Give the Big Picture

Working off the diagram on page 11, make a few comments about each style, highlighting the emphasis of each. If you are doing an online workshop, after giving a quick overview with the Intro to Conflict Styles slideshow, a good followup is to go this page which gives in-depth information about each style. Suggested order for going through the styles: Directing, Harmonizing, Avoiding, Cooperating, Compromising. This sequence goes from the simple to the more complex. That is:

- Everyone "gets" Directing quickly, for we receive so much of it as children and witness so much of it as adults.   For the same reason,

everyone "gets" Harmonizing quickly too - most of us had to do a lot of Harmonizing with teachers and parents to survive childhood.

■ Ditto for Avoiding.

■ Cooperating is not so familiar to most people; the idea that we can simultaneously assert our own agenda and affirm our care for the relationship (by actively supporting the other person and their needs) takes some effort to grasp.

■ Compromising and Cooperating are similar in seeking to maintain both a personal agenda and the relationship, but Compromising is not as confident as Cooperating about being able to find a resolution "if we just keep talking" and seeks an earlier in-between option to settle things.

People grasp each style more easily if they can see and hear it. Choose one or two of the following options:

■ Read aloud the sample quotes for each style on page 11 to the group, using the corresponding tone of voice and body language.

■ Describe a simple conflict and demonstrate what each style would sound and look like if used in that conflict. See details in Appendix 2 at the end of this guide.

■ After you've introduced several styles, have two people do a 60 second demonstration role-play or several of them. See details in Appendix 3.

■ If your group has a lot of time together, watch a soap opera, movie, or newscast that has a lot of conflict and negotiation and note examples of various styles. The movie "Twelve Angry Men", an old classic featuring the deliberations of a trial jury, is useful for this purpose, as are many soap operas.

If you use any of the demonstrations above, especially if you are a trainer new to these materials, preparation is important. If you are demonstrating by yourself, think through carefully beforehand how you will present each style, perhaps writing out a few phrases for each. Ideally you'll be able to do the demos from memory, without the script, but writing the lines out beforehand helps you to get your mind around the characteristics of each style.

If you involve participants in demos, you are more likely to succeed without losing a lot of time if you brief the role-players in advance during a break. If you can't do that, you could write out a little exchange between Person A and Person B and ask two volunteers to read it. This comes at the sacrifice of some spontaneity and authenticity, but it is fast, gives you complete control, and requires no advance briefing – just hand the scripts to two people and have them read.

This section, down to "Making Good Style Choices" on page 20 of this guide, goes with Guideline Two on page 8 and the Tally Sheet on page 7 of the inventory (hardcopy version).

Guideline Two:

Be aware of your own conflict style preferences.

Transition to the next phase: As a way of closing this section and transitioning to the next, you can take people to page 8 and read Guideline One there. Point out that they now have already accomplished this. They have the big picture of conflict styles and are ready to apply it in practical ways. The next guideline, Guideline Two, shows how to do this.

Identify "Most Used Style" and "Least Used Style"

You've given a "big picture" introduction of the logic underlying the inventory. This section now help users locate themselves in that picture.

Scoring of *Style Matters* gives particular attention to a user's highest score style in Storm (since this is the style most likely to get us in difficulty when heat rises) and lowest score styles in Calm (since Calm conditions are an easy setting in which to try out new responses). Here's a suggested sequence for doing this:

1. Explain flexibility as goal and habit as enemy of flexibility.   A key concept with conflict styles is flexibility, being able to use all five styles as needed in the circumstances life brings us.

2. Habit (or autopilot) is the biggest obstacle to being flexible. Guideline 2 on page 8 of the inventory puts it this way:

> Most people have a clear preference for one or two styles. This style feels natural to us since we learn conflict patterns as children and young adults. Each of us was shaped by a situation unique to us, created by our own needs and abilities interacting with the conflict styles of people close to us, and the institutional boundaries of school, religion, and society.
>
> As adults, many of us still prefer the style that we learned to rely on in those early years. That style is fine, neither good nor bad. But if we use it automatically, in almost all conflicts, without awareness that we are using it or that other responses are also available, we set ourselves up for difficulty.

3. Awareness is a path to flexibility. The best protection against reacting on the basis of old habits is awareness.   When we see our patterns we can choose what to do rather than simply react.

4. Discussion builds awareness. This discussion sequence will guide people in reviewing their scores in a way that builds awareness:

- Direct users to look at their scores on page 7. (If you're working with the online version, they will be looking at the Score Report, starting with

the first page.) Ask people to choose (as individuals) the style they are most likely to use when serious differences appear. This is for most people the Storm style in which they have the highest score, but it may be the highest in Calm or any other style they select.

- Now give opportunity to discuss their scores with others.   People enjoy this – describing their scores to others and commenting on styles is a very effective learning process. Use one or both of the options below, depending on time available.

Discussion Option A: Mixed Groups

Set things up so that people talk in groups of threes with whomever is close

Cooperating		Directing		Compromising		Avoiding		Harmonizing	
Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm

by. They can read instructions for this in the Learning Suggestions at bottom of page 8 in the inventory, but I prefer the following variation:

1) Have each person share with their partners which styles they scored highest in. They can turn to pages 12-14a as a reference point for more information about their styles. Invite them to comment on the information they find there about their highest styles. Do they recognize some of the costs and benefits of that style in their own relationships? Give 20-30 minutes for this.

2) Then instruct them to look at and comment to others in their trio about the style in which they scored *lowest*.   In reviewing the benefits of that style, do they recognize that they are missing out on some of these benefits (since they seem not to use it very much)?   What would it look like to try to use it?

Discussion Option B: Same-Style Groups

A different approach is to have people gather in groups of the same style: Directors in one group, Avoiders in another, etc. Keep the groups small, 3-4 in each, so everyone has a chance to talk. Set this up quickly and easily by designating five locations in the room, one for each style.   Have people go to these places, link up with 2-3 others who favor that style, and form a group.

Instructions for the groups: *Using pages 12-14a, go around the group and have*

each person comment about their experience with this style. Which costs and benefits of this style do your recognize in your own relationships? Budget 3-5 minutes per person in the small groups for this.

You can keep these groups together for the second question, about lowest scoring style. Simply ask them to style in their groups and now go around a second time and comment about the style in which they scored *lowest*. (This style will be different for each person, of course.) In reviewing the benefits of that style, do they recognize that they are missing out on some of these benefits (since they seem not to use it very much)? What would it look like to try to use it?

Guidance on Scores

Invite several people to volunteer to call out their scores. Watching the trainer reflect on the numbers helps people to do the same thing for themselves.

List the five styles across the top of a blackboard or sheet of newsprint, as in the chart below. Then ask for a volunteer to call out his or her numbers and write them into your chart on the board. If people are shy about it, you might start with your own numbers and comment on them.

Unless the group is small you will not be able to comment on everyone's scores. But that doesn't matter. Hearing your comments on just a few will help people to grasp what they need to interpret their own scores. With each volunteer, after you've entered their scores in the chart:

- Begin by circling one or two styles with the highest scores in Calm; then do the same thing for Storm.

- Most users will get the greatest benefit by focusing attention on the style or styles that are highest in Storm, since these are likely to be styles most active in times of real difficulty. This is the "preferred Storm style".

- Begin your interaction with a user's scores by highlighting the strengths of the preferred Storm style. Empowerment is always the place to begin! Have the whole group turn to the pages that show

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[1]When we understand how each style functions, we can better communicate to others what we need to be at our best. For example, someone with strong Avoiding instincts who lives or works with someone with strong Directing tendencies can learn to say, "I'm not ready right now to talk this through with you. I need some time to calm down and think about things. But I want you to know I won't just disappear on you. I'd like to go for a walk and get back to you in two hours...." A lot of energy is wasted in conflicts because people don't understand the *style needs* of the other person. The last section of *Style Matters,* on working with styles of others, provides many more such suggestions.

strengths and weaknesses of this style. Comment on the things that people who score high in this style usually do well. There will be others who favor that style too, so you're addressing more than one person.

■ Then review dangers that people who use this style need to consider. These are the "costs (or dangers) of over-use", a key concept to grasp. The whole conflict styles framework is built around the idea that no there is no "bad" or "good" style. The goal is choosing the "right style for each situation" and we can't do this unless we understand the strengths and weaknesses of each style.

■ If there is a style or styles that are quite low, encourage the user to explore that style, and try to get more comfortable with it. If there is a tie for lowest between a style in Storm and one in Calm, focus on the style that is lowest in Calm, since this is probably the style that is getting the least use. (In general, we have access to more personal resources when we are calm than when we are anxious. Thus a style that we don't use even in Calm could be considered pretty far out of reach.)

Guideline Three:

Develop style flexibility.

Sometimes Directing is the Only Responsible Style Choice

For a parent whose four year old child is running towards a busy street, the only loving response is a Directing one. It could be fatal to Avoid, Harmonize, Cooperate, or Compromise. Similarly, when a ship is sinking, we don't want a captain who gathers the crew and says, "let's negotiate...." Or a doctor in the emergency room who allows assistants to do as they please.

In emergencies, we need someone to take charge (which is why military, police, medical, and disaster structures are set up in hierarchical structures; emergencies is their arena of operation.) We all benefit from the abilities of people who are strong Directors.

But those who naturally prefer Directing have a challenge in self-management. If the emergency room doctor takes the Directing style home to spouse and family and friends, and makes a habit of telling everyone else what to do without paying attention to their needs and feelings, his or her personal life will be miserable.

Same for each of the styles. Cooperating sounds wonderful. It is, in the right place and time. But people who over-use a Cooperating style get burned out. Too many meetings, too much talk, endless processing with too little coming to closure in decision-making, etc.

The challenge is for all of us to get good at all of the styles so we don't over-use any of them.
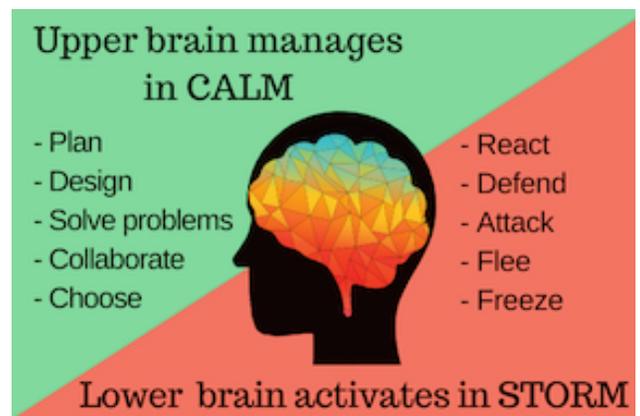

- If the numbers are quite even, a "flat profile", point out that this is desirable, for it indicates flexibility. There is one possible disadvantage: others may experience this flexibility as unpredictable. They never know which style they will encounter! Therefore a growth challenge for flat profilers can be learning to articulate their intentions and purposes clearly to others so they can more easily make sense of our response.[1]

- After commenting on one or two Storm scores, note the interaction between Calm and Storm. It is particularly interesting to observe which direction the scores suggest the individual goes in times of stress.   Do the numbers shift toward towards greater concern for the relationship or towards task/agenda?

- With all of your comments, aim to word things along the lines of "people with this style preference often....", rather than "you are....." We are trainers, not psychologists or astrologers!

- When you comment on numbers, the user should have "the last word" on their meaning. Encourage users to consider the numbers as "food for thought", not as a definitive statement on who they are. Suggest that they set the numbers aside if they think they are not accurate. Encourage them to ask friends and colleagues for a second opinion if they disagree with the score.

Making Good Style Choices

Making good style choices begins with recognizing the strengths of each style and its limitations. As a trainer, be a relaxed, cheerful ally of all five styles. Respect the strengths of each even as you acknowledge its limitations. Every style really is necessary for successful human relationships.

Sometimes, for example, in workshop discussions, people reject Directing as pushy or Avoiding as timid or dishonest. More than the other styles, these two, when used excessively, are conspicuous in their limitations. But anyone who is not able to use them competently is going to get stuck in life situations we all encounter.

This section goes with Guideline Four on page 10 of the print version of Style Matters.

Guideline Four:

Increase awareness of your Storm Shift.

Someone is not convinced? Doesn't want to ever be a Director? See the text box "Sometimes Directing is the Only Responsible Style Choice" below for a response you could make as trainer.

Suggestions for working with this section. When time is short, you can skip the section on "Choosing Responses to Conflict" (page 15 of the print version). The previous pages each have a section on the "Benefits" and "Costs of Over-Use" which covers related ideas. If you reviewed these in the introduction to each style, people have already seen that each style possesses both resources and danger.

But if the question of choosing the right style has not yet come up, here is a good place. Pages 15 and 16 give useful information about when and when not to use each style. Some options in working with these pages:

- Take the group to page 15 and read the short paragraph at top of the page. Then put people in pairs or small groups. Each group is assigned a different style and asked to come up with one example of when they have seen this style wisely used and another example of a time when it was inappropriately used. Share these in the larger group. If the group is up for it, you could have each present their examples as short skits.

- Do a round of small group discussion focused specifically on appropriate choice of styles. Put people in small groups without reference to styles. The topic of discussion is: "A time when I used a style appropriately and another time when I used a style inappropriately." Encourage them to make reference to the information on pages 15 and 16 as they do this.

Managing the Storm Shift

Some people experience a change in preferred style as conflict heats up. They begin a conflict with one style, then, as emotions and stress go up, they shift to a different style.

The likely cause is changes in brain functioning that take place when human

Calm conditions	Storm conditions
■ Our response when we first realize there are differences.	■ After we've made some effort to resolve things without success.
■ We are not yet very upset or anxious.	■ Emotions have risen; we are anxious, upset, worried, etc.
■ The style we use for day-to-day decision-making and problem-solving of difference that has not stirred emotions strongly.	

beings are stressed.   Higher brain functions are in charge when stress and emotions are moderate.

But when anger, fear, or stress rise, the lower "reptilian brain" begins to influence thoughts and actions, and may even take charge. The lower brain is survival oriented and has none of the complex problem-solving skills associated with higher brain functioning.

Some people display big shifts in conflict style as they transition from Calm to Storm functioning. The shift may be from Harmonizing to Directing, from Directing to Harmonizing, from Cooperating to Avoiding, or any other pattern. If the Storm Shift is large or sudden, it may surprise, confuse, or shock others.

As a concept, the Storm Shift is simple to understand and need not occupy much time to explain. Options for working with it:

- With the group read Guideline 4 on page 10, including the Learning Suggestions that accompany it. Invite questions or comments.

- Review with the group the difference between Calm and Storm conditions. You can use the chart comparing the two as a resource.

Although the Storm Shift is easy to understand as a concept, managing it in real life can be difficult. About one-third of Style Matters users display a significant shift pattern. For them, it takes effort to recognize the Storm shift in themselves as it happens and make conscious self-management choices. The natural tendency, of course, when emotions rise, is to slide along on autopilot and not make conscious choices. Then habit rules.

Even if there is no Storm shift apparent in people's numbers, it is still useful to reflect on how they "somatize" conflict. Where in the body do they respond to conflict?   What strategies or personal disciplines do people find helpful to manage their response to intense conflict? Even those who don't have a big Storm shift benefit from identifying their own signals of rising anger.

Some people stay the same in Calm and Storm. But some people have sharp differences between the two. For example:

- A Directing person who in Calm conditions is very assertive might rather suddenly go quiet, or back off and say, "Well, whatever. if you feel that strongly about it, let's do it your way….."   This would be a storm shift from Directing to Harmonizing.

- Someone who is normally eager to please might be flexible in the beginning of a conflict and then suddenly turn sharp and angry: "Look, I've had enough of this. I insist that….."   This would reflect a shift from Harmonizing in Calm to Directing in Storm.

Points that you can make in helping users make sense of their numbers regarding Calm and Storm:

- People who show little difference in Calm and Storm are usually experienced by others as steady and predictable.
- People who have a sharp contrast between the two may surprise or alarm others and themselves.
- Self-awareness is the most important resource in managing a sharp Storm shift. This assists self-management and even explanation to others about what is happening.
- Anything that gives the rational brain opportunity to regain executive control is likely to help. Go for a walk, count to ten,

Discussion Exercise on the Storm Shift: This exercise is designed to help individuals begin to develop greater self-awareness about the Storm Shift and, in the calm space of a workshop, to think through specific responses they can take to help manage the Storm shift:

Put people in groups of three and invite them to comment on their scores regarding a Storm shift. If there is a Storm shift apparent in their scores, invite people to reflect on the inner signs they associate with this shift: a suddenly pounding heart, heat in the face or neck, a flash of anger in the head, fear in the chest, churning in the gut, clenched hands, etc.

What to say about scores in the Storm shift: *Compare your numbers in Calm and Storm. If there is a shift in any of your styles of three points or more from Calm and Storm, pay attention to this. If the shift is five points or more, chances are that your Storm shift sometimes confuses or alarms others.*

In conflict situations, learn to recognize the inner signs that accompany a shift: a suddenly pounding heart; heat in the face or know; clenched fists, a feeling of swelling in the temples, etc. If you find it difficult to name these, ask someone who knows you well to give you feedback about what they notice when you become angry.

Simple awareness is your most important tool for self-management. If awareness alone seems insufficient to help you manage your Storm Shift, discuss with others you trust what you could do when you feel stressed that would help you use the style you want to use.

Web resources on Anger Management. Anger management is an important topic for everyone. Anger is a part of life for all of us, including those who are

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This section goes with Guideline Five on page 10, and pages 17-19 in Style Matters.

Guideline Five: *Learn Strategies to Support others at Their Best.*

See also Support Strategies Appreciated by Each Style in the online tutorial.

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[2]This reflects a basic pedagogical principle: Whenever learning can be tied to authentic self-knowledge, the yields are high.

good at staying calm. But individuals with a pronounced Storm shift are particularly likely to benefit from reading and discussion about anger management.

See my short essay, *What to Do When You're Angry*, on the Riverhouse website, for basics of Anger Management. You could assign individuals to read and discuss this essay with at least one other person and compare their reactions to the ideas there. This would also make a great paper assignment for a professor to give to students who have a significant Storm shift.

There are numerous other resources on anger management in the list of web resources on the Riverhouse website.

Strategies for Working with Styles of Others

This is for many learners the most rewarding and empowering part of the inventory. The strategies are specific, detailed and practical, and they appeal to the desire we all have to make the world a better place.

The text of the Style Matters print copy is written to help users see how to bring out the best in *others*. However, for discussion in a training setting, it works better to frame the discussion differently, at least in the beginning, to this question: Which strategies would work best for me if someone else used them on me? This framing enables participants to speak as authorities from territory they know well, their own needs[2].

As we become more clear about our own needs and preferences regarding styles, two valuable things happen:

- We can more easily create patterns of planning and decision making that bring out the best in us;
- We are more able to take responsibility for communicating our needs and preferences to others in positive ways.
  For example, there's a big difference between, "No, I don't want to talk about it!" and "You know, I need to give that some thought. If we could plan to discuss this tomorrow evening, I'll be in a much better frame of mind. Would you give me a day to turn this over in my head? " Both of those statements come from someone with strong Avoiding instincts, but the first is easier for a partner to cope with than the second.

Options for working with this section:

- Input. Review pages 17-19 with the group.   If time is limited, it is possible to review strategies in all five styles in ten minutes or less.

- Small group reflection. Have people find one or two other people with different styles preferences. In these small groups, each person goes through the strategies for their own preferred style with the others in the small group and comments. For example, "Yes, the first strategy would really work if you tried it on me. The second, not so well......"

- Small groups of colleagues. A variation on the above is to have people who work together do this in pairs or teams. They sit in a circle (assuming it is a team) and each person uses this section to make some comments about self. "I am high in Directing and Cooperating. Here are a couple tips you should know about me that would really help me if you get in a conflict with me....."

- Small groups organized by conflict style. You can form caucus groups for each style (one group is Directing, another Harmonizing, etc.). Give the groups 15 minutes to discuss the strategies and then give a report back to the large group. "These are things we really want the rest of you to know about our style...."

- Have each person create a "My Support Page". (Users of the Online Version see menu item Create a My Support Page under top menu, Support, which makes it easy for users to cut and paste all suggestions into their own file.) They review the strategies for their highest scoring styles and from these select those they would appreciate having others use with them. Then, review the strategies for their lowest scoring style and select the strategies they would not want others to use with them.

  With this information, anyone can easily create a page of suggestions for others around them.   That is, if you get in a conflict with me, DO this....., DON'T do this.....

- Dialogue about support strategies. See Exercise 6 on page 21, which guides colleagues in an organization to reflect on conflict style pairings that have been difficult. Discussion of strategies is included in this exercise.

Cultural Dimensions of Conflict Styles

Cultural diversity is a big issue in modern life. Many groups are diverse, a reality that is often overlooked.   Minority people often quietly accept that they will have to adjust to majority preferences but the emotional costs of this can be high, in the form of disappointment, frustration, and exhaustion.

There are no easy answers to cultural diversity. But at a minimum, we need
to work for greater awareness of diversity so we can make better choices about it. As a trainer you can introduce awareness that will be valuable for many users by reflecting with a group on how culture influences response
to conflict.

Why Two Different Sets of Instructions? Style Matters is designed for people of varying cultural backgrounds and achieves this by providing differing instructions for users depending on their background. See these in the text box on your right. You don't have to include discussion about this but if you have time for one, users will benefit.

Instruction Set A invites users to think about themselves "in general" while Set B guides users to think about a *specific* relationship.

The context specific instructions of Set B are more appropriate for users who come from cultural backgrounds with strong communitarian influences. In such settings, people instinctively seek out information from the context before deciding how to respond to conflict.

Whereas in individualist cultures people look inwards and speak from their individual preferences, in communitarian cultures, people instinctively consider external factors. Showing respect for age, roles, status, tradition,
and community norms is more important than satisfying your own individual preference.

Thus, in a communitarian culture, in order to answer the question "How
do *you* deal with conflict?", an individual needs to think about something
else: With whom is the conflict? Instruction Set B enables such users

User Instructions for Taking Style Matters

Users are asked to choose one of the instruction sets below.

Instruction Set A
General Sketch

Think about your typical responses when your wishes differ from those of another person. Though there may be exceptions, what is typical for you? Your "gut-level response" to the question is likely to be most accurate. For each question, choose the number between 1 (Rarely) and 7 (Usually) that best describes what you actually do.

Instruction Set B
Snapshot in One Setting

Choose one context for answering the questions. For example, select a person or particular kind of relationship (co-workers of same status as you, personal friends, a committee in your religious community, etc.) with whom you have experienced disagreements or conflict. Think about your responses in this situation as you answer the questions, choosing the number between 1 (Rarely) and 7 (Usually) that best describes what you actually do.

to supply details of context so they are able to comfortably choose an answer.

You can totally ignore this aspect of Style Matters if you want and leave out a discussion of cultural issues. When time is short, I recommend this so you have enough time to cover the basics of conflict styles.

But if you can allocate 30-90 minutes to talk about cultural differences, the payoffs in increased awareness of cultural differences may be high for participants. No matter where people live or work today, the odds are high that they will observe or interact on a daily basis with people who were brought up with different understandings than about how to deal with conflict than their own.

Preparing Yourself as Trainer. An important preparation you can do as a trainer for such discussion is to develop a clear understanding about the difference between individualist and collectivist culture, also known as "low context" and "high context" cultures.

If you expect to have people in the workshop from diverse cultural backgrounds, make a point of reading the Instructions on page 3 and Note 1 on page 22 (see also on the right) and the page on cultures on the Riverhouse website before the workshop so you understand them clearly and have a grasp of the difference between those two modes of functioning.   To learn more, do web research on *individualist collectivist cultures* or on *high context low context cultures*.

If you can allocate some group time to cultural issues, here are some options:

- **Invite sharing about personal history.** In many groups there are individuals with one foot in each culture. Having grown up in a conflict avoiding Mennonite farming community in Pennsylvania, but gone to universities in Indiana, Massachusetts and South Africa and lived and worked in various countries, I myself am one such person.

  The same could be said about, for example, many Native Americans or aboriginals who work in the professional world. An American or German development worker in rural Africa or Latin America would be examples of people with roots in Individualist cultures whose work requires them to function in communitarian settings.

  Ask for volunteers who feel that they live or work in both kinds of communities.   Interview them in the presence of the whole group. Ask questions that draw out their experiences of the differences between

these cultures in general, and specifically in dealing with conflict. How do they function in each culture when preferences differ? What does it feel like to move back and forth between the two cultures? Invite group members to share in response.

■ Give a **brief presentation on the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures**. Then put people into mixed pairs or small groups and have them talk about what they have heard.   Suggest that each person share a conflict with someone from a different culture and comment on an insight about this conflict from the concept of individualist vs. collectivist cultures. Encourage them to be resources to each other in understanding what happened, and to use the collectivist/individualist framework as a tool if possible.

■ **Drawing as a discussion tool.** Exercise 7 on page 21 in *Style Matters* describes a discussion exercise for small groups as follows: Put people into small groups of individualist background only or collectivist background only. Ask each group to create a picture of a conflict experienced by someone in their group, using vehicles as a major part of the drawing.   Have each group share with the larger group:
- What kind of vehicle or vehicles did they choose to represent the major parties and why?
- Who is driving the vehicles?
- Who else is in the picture and what are their connections to the conflicting people?
- What factors do conflictants consider in deciding how to respond to the conflict?

When all groups have shared, reflect as a whole group. What insights do you gain about differences between individualist and collectivistic patterns in dealing with conflict?   What insights do people get about relationships or conflicts they may have experienced that have cultural dimensions?

■ **Story-telling.** Here is a narrative exercise similar to the above: Put people in similar groups (collectivists in one group; individualists in another).   Ask each group to talk about an experience when they saw a major conflict within their own culture.   What were the things that seemed to shape people's efforts to find resolution in these conflicts? What constructive things were done to try to resolve the conflict? What destructive things were done? What would an intermediary try to

do in their culture?   After these caucus groups have had time to reflect on a conflict, bring the groups together and share descriptions. Then lead a group discussion on the differences between the two cultures.

In such a discussion the point is often made that selfishness, jealousy, and resentment are universal and create similar responses everywhere. This is true, of course. But the point still stands that such emotions are managed in responses that differ greatly across cultures.   Someone who identifies self strongly as "I" is likely to think and do different things in times of conflict than someone who identifies self strongly in terms of "we" (family, group, community). When people try to rise above these universal petty responses, we do so in ways deeply influenced by culture.

Closing the Workshop

- Exercise number 8 on page 21 of the printed version can be an uplifting way to end, if you are blessed with the presence of a strong partnership between two reflective and articulate people. From that exercise: "Select two people who work together and have different conflict styles, but know and trust each other. Have them talk in the presence of the whole group about their style differences, how they see each other, how they have learned to work with and respect each others' style differences, etc."

- You could have people write a memo of advice to self. What are the things they want to work on in the coming month? Urge them to be specific, with whom, when, where, how…. If you as trainer are in a position to do individual follow-up, this memo would be a great place to start conversations later. Eg: let's review your memo to yourself…. How do you feel you are doing with it….?

- You could do a closing circle. Sit or stand in a large circle (or if a large group, several smaller ones). Go around the circle and invite each person to share one thing they will take away from this workshop. A variation: each person gets one sentence to dedicate this experience to a person in their life past or present who taught them important values about dealing well with conflict.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING EXERCISES

Dialogue about Conflict Styles

In all four of the teaching strategies described in this guide, learners benefit greatly by having discussion with others about conflict styles in the context of real life. Even with the Solo learning strategy, in which the learning of core concepts of conflict styles is done in an independent, self-directed way, learners who have completed the inventory and tutorial will benefit by having a conversation with someone else about what they've learned.

The following offer a variety of topics and formats for structuring such a discussion.

1. Discuss scores in pairs or trios. After sharing your scores, tell a story about a conflict you have been a part of. Do the scores fit your real-life response? In which styles would you like to improve? If your numbers indicate a significant shift in style from calm to storm, are you aware of making such a shift? What factors are most likely to trigger this shift in you? How does the shift affect others?

2. Meet in small groups of similar-style people. For example, in one group is Directors, in another Cooperators, etc. If you have nearly equal scores in two styles, choose the style which seems to most often get you into difficulty. In the group, begin by collectively reviewing the info about the style of that group. Then give each person opportunity to reflect aloud on the following questions:

    ■ Which strengths of the style do you see present in your handling of life and relationships?

    ■ Which weaknesses or costs from overuse do you see?

    ■ Which support strategies do you find especially applicable to you?

    When you reconvene as a whole group, with all styles present, have a reporter from each small group give a summary of insights from that group to the whole group, so all can increase their understanding of each style.

3. People who live or work together benefit greatly from conversation about their styles. A suggested discussion sequence:

    ■ Share scores with each other.

- Reflect on the scores, with each person responding to the questions in item 2 above.

- Recall a time when differences arose between you. Do the scores reflect how you actually responded?

- Each person can reflect aloud, in the presence of others, on the "Strategies for Supporting Styles of Others" pages. Which strategies would they particularly like others to use that would help bring out the best in the speaker?

4. Have someone who knows you well take the test "for" you based on their observation of you. Then compare your own scores for yourself and the ones they give you. Where do the scores agree? Where do they differ? What are the gifts of your preferred style or styles? Which styles do you want to work on for improvement?

   More comprehensive still: Have several people do this for you. In organizations, you can do "360 Feedback" by having people above, beneath, and on par with you take it "for" you. (Do a web search on the phrase for tips and cautions regarding facilitating this conversation.)

5. People in teams and organizations will be rewarded by discussing the impact of styles in times of negotiation or decision-making. Each style has different preferences for how to go about things (e.g., how direct and open to be in stating preferences, how much relationship-building time to include in decision-making, how rapidly to make decisions, etc.) Discuss: What insights do we get about our collective decision-making processes from looking at these scores? About difficulties we have encountered? About how to improve decision-making in the future?

6. People in teams and organizations also benefit by discussing difficult style combinations. A lot of conflicts escalate because the people involved have different style preferences and thus prefer differing approaches to dealing with differences.

   For example, Directors and Cooperators want to put things right out there and talk about them *now*, whereas Avoiders prefer to step back and think about things first. Each tends to assume that "good" people would use the approach they favor. As a result, there are now two sources of tension - one about the issues and the other about *how to deal with the issues*!

   With others in your team or organization, identify particular pairings of styles that commonly cause difficulties. Think about recent conflicts. In what ways did style expectations play a role? What insights can people

exchange about future conflicts?

7. If your group has people from both individualist and collectivist cultural backgrounds, you can have an illuminating discussion. Separate into small groups of individualists only or collectivists only.

    Ask each group to create a picture showing a conflict someone in their group has experienced, using vehicles as a major part of the drawing. Have each group share with the larger group: What kind of vehicles did they choose for the parties and why? Who is driving the vehicles? Who else is in the picture and with what connections to the conflictants? What factors do conflictants consider in deciding how to respond to the conflict?

    When all groups have shared, reflect as a whole group: What insights did you gain about differences between individualist and collectivist conflicts?

8. Here is a discussion for group settings that inspires hope: Select two people who work together and have different styles, but know and trust each other well. Have them talk in the presence of the whole group about their style differences, how they see each other, how they have learned to work with and respect their style differences, etc.

Training Exercise: Memo from a Supervisor

This exercise is used after the trainer has worked with the group in explaining the logic of the five styles and reviewing how each style works. It was devised by Carolyn Schock-Shenk, professor at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, and written up by Larry Dunn, professor at Fresno Pacific College, Fresno, California.

Divide the large group into small groups mixed so that there is at least one

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MEMO

TO: You

FROM: Your Supervisor

RE: Your Performance

DATE: Today

I have had several reports in recent weeks suggesting that you are having difficulty relating to your colleagues.

I would like to discuss this with you in my office on Friday this week at 10:00. 3:00 pm.

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representative in each group for each of the five styles. Hand a copy of the memo below to each person. Fold the memo or hand it out face down, and ask that no one read the memo until instructed. When everyone has a copy, ask them to open the memo or turn it over and read it silently. As they do this, write on the board:

Take 2-3 minutes and jot down a few words or phrases in response to these questions:

1) *When I got this memo I felt/thought......*
2) *What I want/need in dealing with this is.....*

Give people a couple minutes on this. Then direct them into small group discussion. Ask them to sit in a circle and go around the circle, sharing their responses to the question. Give at least 20 minutes for this sharing and more if possible. Ask them to draw on the conflict style inventory materials to reflect on and explain their response.

This exercise helps participants to realize how differently people respond to the same situation/event. It also helps them understand *why* others respond so differently.

Demonstrating the Five Styles in One Simple Conflict

Here is a strategy to demonstrate the five styles with one case study.
A veteran trainer writes:

In presenting the styles, I often take a simple conflict like two partners trying to decide what to do on a Friday night.   When I describe the Directing style, I work with this as an example, and show what it would sound like if someone is using Directing style. Something like, "We're going to go to a movie (said in a commanding voice) A walk in the park? Don't be stupid!"   I point out that the personal agenda of the Director is extremely prominent and no sense of commitment to the relationship comes through at all.

Harmonizing in this example might sound like, "Oh, whatever, I just want to be with you....."

For Avoiding, I ask the group what an Avoiding response might be, and they usually correctly guess that there'd be no discussion. Possibly a vague hint or two but no really discussion.

Cooperating: "There's a new movie in town that I'd really like to see.   I'd love to go with you. But I want to do something we're both happy with.   What were you thinking about for tonight?"

Compromising: "I thought about seeing that new movie, but I guess mainly I want to do something that helps me forget the week.   You want to stay home? Ok, how about if we rent a video....."

Using Roleplay to Demo Styles

In this approach the trainer sets up demonstration role-plays that give a sense of how various styles operate. Here are several   ideas:
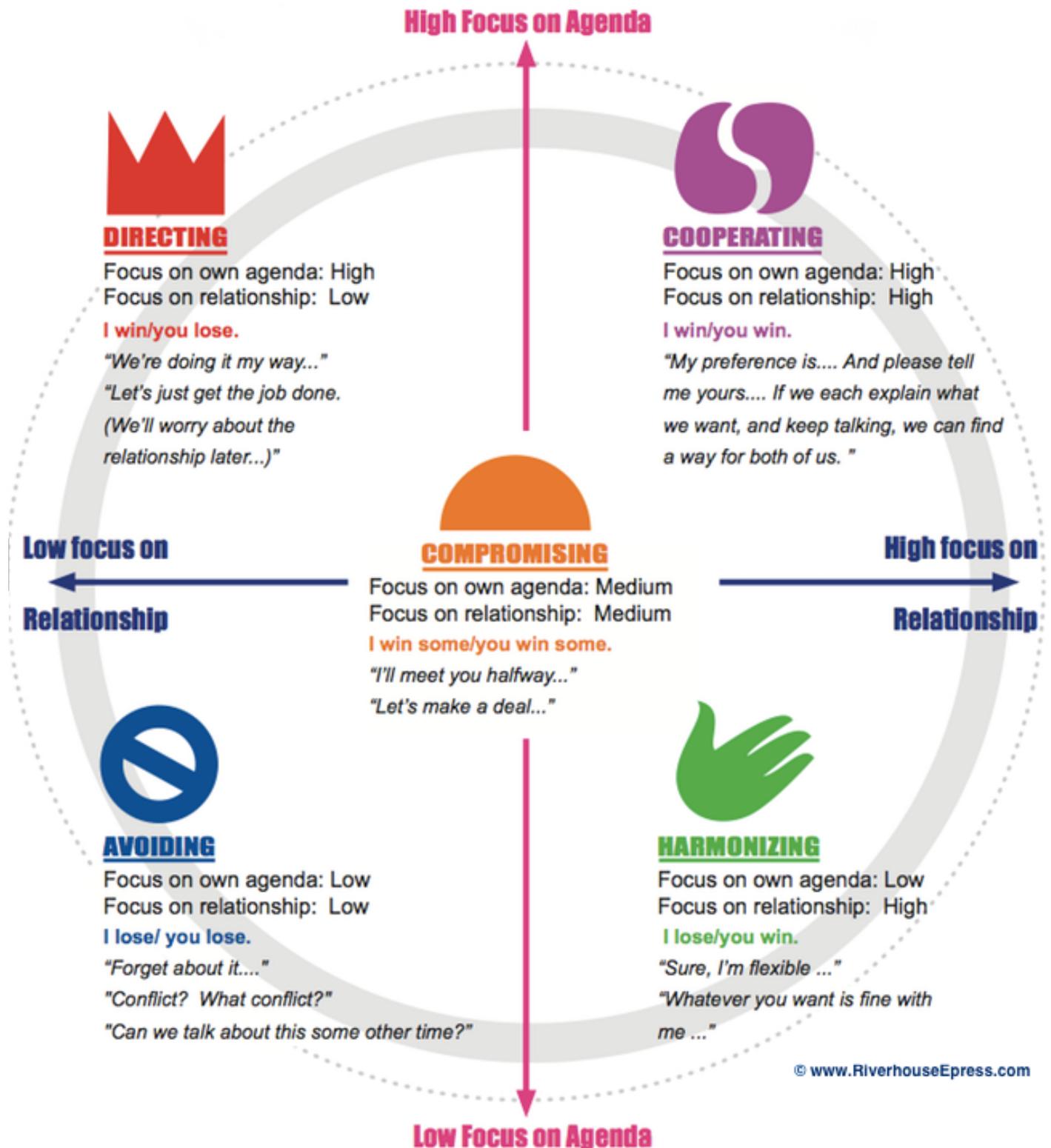
1. After you've introduced Directing and Harmonizing, have two people demonstrate the use of these styles in a two minute conversation with each other. One uses Directing and the other Harmonizing.

2. Avoiding is so obvious it hardly requires a demo.   Maybe sitting alone doing their own thing.   Or showing the lame little excuses people make to each other when they are avoiding and trying to be polite about it. It's interesting to ask about the "self-talk" we do when we choose avoidance as a response.

3. Introduce Cooperating and then do a demonstration of Cooperating and Harmonizing (perhaps noting that Cooperators tend to get uncomfortable when someone is overly Harmonizing because the Cooperator then appears to be Directing, even though that is not intended.)

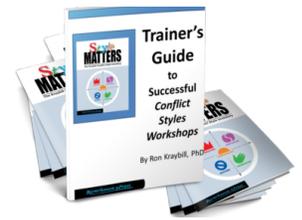4. Introduce Compromising and then do a demo showing the interaction of Compromising and Directing.

Unrelated to the above exercise, included here simply for reference if needed, you will find on the next page a graphic of the five styles on one page.

Five Styles of Conflict

High Focus on Agenda

DIRECTING

Focus on own agenda: High
Focus on relationship: Low

I win/you lose.

"We're doing it my way..."
"Let's just get the job done.
(We'll worry about the
relationship later...)"

COOPERATING

Focus on own agenda: High
Focus on relationship: High

I win/you win.

"My preference is.... And please tell
me yours.... If we each explain what
we want, and keep talking, we can find
a way for both of us. "

Low focus on Relationship

COMPROMISING

Focus on own agenda: Medium
Focus on relationship: Medium

I win some/you win some.

"I'll meet you halfway..."
"Let's make a deal..."

High focus on Relationship

AVOIDING

Focus on own agenda: Low
Focus on relationship: Low

I lose/ you lose.

"Forget about it...."
"Conflict? What conflict?"
"Can we talk about this some other time?"

HARMONIZING

Focus on own agenda: Low
Focus on relationship: High

I lose/you win.

"Sure, I'm flexible ..."
"Whatever you want is fine with
me ..."

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Low Focus on Agenda

ABOUT STYLE MATTERS

Users answer 20 questions in *Style Matters* and are scored on five common responses to conflict. Different instructions for users from individualistic and collectivist cultures allow users to questions in a way that seems familiar to them.

Interpretive materials highlight the strengths of each style and point out the dangers of over-use unique to each. Additional sections provide tips for bringing out the best in each style.

Users need 10-15 minutes to take the test. Interpretation can be done in 30 minutes or up to 8 hours. A detailed trainers' guide with step-by-step guidance for a variety of training uses can be downloaded for free on the Riverhouse website.

Style Matters is available in 3 formats:

- **Print** - 24 pages in full-color or part-color for $6.95 to $9.95 depending on quantity.

- **Online -** Creates an 8 page score report with recommendations tailored to user, easy emailing, and online tutorial. Trainer options include a trainer dashboard to track user activity and pre-paid coupon access.

- **PDF** - Identical to print version, provides immediate access to purchasers of rights to reproduce. Available in English and French, PDF costs $9.95; rights to reproduce cost $3.95 per user.

Style Matters is a leader in providing online resources for conflict resolution training. These include:

- Trainer dashboard with bulk registration capacity (enables trainers to upload usernames from a spreadsheet), easy group emailing tools, capacity to send score reports to the trainer only and not directly to users, ability to monitor which users have taken the inventory and who have not, easy aggregation of scores, and more.

- Coupon access, enabling a trainer to purchase access for a large number of users and allow them to quickly register and take the inventory.

- Online tutorial, allowing completely self-managed learning and

interpretation of scores.

- Free trainer's guide and free online access to Intro to Conflict Styles slide presentations.
- Free guide to online resources on conflict styles.

Style Matter's Unique Cultural Flexibility

Style Matters has a unique element of cultural flexibility that allows users to choose from two approaches in answering questions. Trainers can easily incorporate this feature into discussion if they choose. Read my essay on high context and low context cultures to understand why this feature was developed and why you might want to include some discussion of it in a workshop. See the section in this trainer's guide on "Cultural Dimensions of Conflict Styles" for suggestions on how to set up such a discussion.

Psychometric Validation

Independent researchers at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania conducted research in 2008-2009 with 300 subjects and assisted in adapting the inventory to meet accepted standards of validity and reliability. (Braz, Lawton, Kraybill, and Daly, "Validation of the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory", presented at the 96th Annual Convention of the National Communication Association, San Francisco. For more info, contact BLawton@wcupa.edu)

A doctoral study using Style Matters found the instrument performed well in reliability testing and was "valid and reliable". Jean Chronis Kuhn, who received her Doctorate in Nursing Practice at Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions, administered Style Matters to Massachusetts nursing home directors to assess conflict management styles before and after a conflict management teaching intervention.

Kuhns wrote: "One... consequence was the unanticipated finding that the adapted version of the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory performed so well during reliability testing, leading to the conclusion that the model and conflict measurement tools have immense applicability to other nursing settings as well as sustainability."

Why Trainers Love Style Matters

- Based on **simple "five-styles-of-conflict"** framework familiar to many trainers. If you have worked with the Thomas Kilmann or another inventory based on the Mouton Blake grid, you'll be in the same framework.

- **Easy to take.** Questions are answered on a 1-7 spectrum; no forced choice!

- **Respectful towards users,** it honors strengths and raises awareness of the limitations of all styles.

- **Cross-cultural option** (included in all versions but unobtrusive when not needed) makes Style Matters credible to people from diverse cultural backgrounds and helps groups talk about cultural differences.

- **Clear, actionable feedback.** Participants go home with insights that really make a difference.

- **Free Trainer's Guide** makes it easy to plan workshops.

- **Empowers trainers** of all levels. Diverse formats and support materials make it easy even for facilitators with no previous conflict styles training history to lead a successful learning experience.

- **Great discussion questions** included with the print version. Put people in small groups and watch discussions take off with proven starters.

- **Low-cost.** Affordable for virtually all groups.

Trainer Comments About Style Matters

All quotes by permission.

"We were previously using the Thomas-Kilmann in our staff trainings and have received a lot of positive feedback since the switch."

* Michael E. Rhodes, LCSW, CPHQ, Director of Quality Improvement, Preferred Behavioral Health of NJ, Brick, NJ

"I want to say how pleased I am with the instrument. Earlier this Fall I previewed the instrument and facilitators guide - last week was the first time I had an opportunity to use it and it was very well-received by the group."

* Doris Trainor, Director of Employee Relations and Professional Development, Loyola College, Baltimore, MD

"We have used the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory twice and are extremely pleased....."

* James Reynolds, Organizational Development and Training, Department of Consumer and Business Services, Oregon

"I use Style Matters as a teaching tool in my basic mediation classes and in seminars for experienced conflict resolution professionals. Every time I use the inventory, participants become thoroughly engaged in learning about their own and others' conflict styles. When they evaluate classes and seminars, they frequently write that they will use the information learned through the inventory."

* Walter Wright, Associate Professor, Legal Studies, Department of Political Science, Texas State University, San   Marcos, Texas

"Recently I used your conflict style inventory with a local organization.. We spent a day on it and they really liked it. People commented a lot about how much they got out of it..... "

* Phoebe Kilby, Sympoetica, Woodstock, Virginia

"Having used [it] for several years, I can say it is hands-down the best thing on the market. I do a fair amount of mediation training and I find that the approach the inventory takes makes it extremely useful for training..... I have also used it with professionals (engineers, planners, lawyers) and find it effective in introducing concepts and skills of conflict resolution."

* Laura Bachle, Confluence Consulting

"Very helpful in starting discussion and giving us a framework to use when we are processing conflicts within the group. It's simple to understand and fun to work with!

* Penn Garvin, Long-time trainer, mediator, community activist and founder of International Peace builders, Managua, Nicaragua

Finally, a multi-faceted tool that unpacks a diversity of conflict styles without putting one in a box. Bravo! The highlights of culture, situational context and conflict intensity are welcomed complexities that give integrity to the inventory.... [It was] a thought-provoking experience in discovering stepping stones for conflict transformation competencies.."

* Carl Stauffer, Co- coordinator, Regional Peace Network Southern Africa, Mennonite Central Committee

"....... a wonderful tool in both mediation and counseling settings in the United States and internationally. It has been especially helpful in my leadership training courses taught in the US, Philippines, and Congo-DRC."

* Tony Redfern, Executive Director, New Path Center, Inc., Kingsburg, California

"An excellent tool! A thorough presentation that can be used by people from all cultures. Asks the right questions, deals with the important reality that people react differently to conflicts in

the beginning than later when they intensify. The reflections and discussion section is really well done. The suggestions are practical, and allow participants to go deeper into analysis."

* Brian Bloch, Director, ISKCONResolve, Mumbai, India

"A very useful instrument. Concise, well organized, with easy to follow instructions. Interpretation is clear, simple, and specific. The helpful "Hot Tips for Working with Styles of Others" reflect the competence and experience of the author. This is an instrument I am eager to use in my work as a consultant and teacher. "

* Marcus G. Smucker, PhD. Congregational consultant, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

".... a huge success in class. My students were very fascinated by their results...Thank you so much!"

* N. Caroline college prof

"There is so much interest in this topic at my campus and I think your learning tools are really fantastic. I really appreciate the support you offer in getting prepared to use them

A Partial Listing of Style Matters Clients

AAMC	Justice Institute of British Columbia	United State Coast Guard
ADR International Group		University of Calgary
AT&T	Liberty University	
AVISAR Chartered Accountants	Libscomb Univeristy	University of California Davis
BC Cancer Foundation	Maryland Judiciary	University of California San Francisco
Banque of Canada	Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre	University of Colorado Denver
Collaborative Water Resolution	Moravian Board of Cooperative Ministries	University of Maryland
Canadian Armed Forces		University of North Carolina of Chapel Hill
Eastern Oregon Business Source	Mt. Sinai School of Medicine	University of Pittsburgh
Earnst and Young	Schulich School of Business	University of Windsor
	Seattle Pacific University	Valspar
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America	Southern Regional Area Health Education Center	Western Kentucky University
George Mason U - ICAR	United States Air Force	