

## Co-operantics

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN PROVERBS: What am I like?

The list of international proverbs and sayings below can be related to different strategies we might adopt to resolve conflicts. Read each statement carefully. How typical is that statement of your usual approach to resolving conflicts? Give each proverb a score using the following scale:

**5 very typical      4 frequently      3 sometimes      2 seldom      1 never**

1. \_\_\_\_ Let sleeping dogs lie
2. \_\_\_\_ If you cannot make a person think as you do, make him do as you think
3. \_\_\_\_ Soft words win hard hearts
4. \_\_\_\_ You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours
5. \_\_\_\_ One finger cannot lift a pebble
6. \_\_\_\_ Discretion is the better part of valour
7. \_\_\_\_ Might is right
8. \_\_\_\_ If you do not step on the dog's tail, he will not bite you
9. \_\_\_\_ Better half a loaf than no bread
10. \_\_\_\_ Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable
11. \_\_\_\_ Who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day
12. \_\_\_\_ He hath conquered well that hath made his enemies flee
13. \_\_\_\_ Kill with kindness
14. \_\_\_\_ Do as you would be done by
15. \_\_\_\_ It takes a village to raise a child
16. \_\_\_\_ Stay away from people who disagree with you
17. \_\_\_\_ A snake at your feet, a stick at your hand!
18. \_\_\_\_ It is better to be loved than feared
19. \_\_\_\_ Tit for tat
20. \_\_\_\_ In union there is strength
21. \_\_\_\_ Make your enemy your friend
22. \_\_\_\_ A person who will not flee will make others flee
23. \_\_\_\_ Lower your head modestly while passing and you will harvest bananas
24. \_\_\_\_ When the bee comes to your house, let her have beer, you may want to  
visit the bee's house one day
25. \_\_\_\_ Only when all contribute their firewood can they build up a strong fire

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26. \_\_\_\_\_ The best way of handling conflicts is to avoid them
27. \_\_\_\_\_ Put your foot down where you mean to stand
28. \_\_\_\_\_ A soft answer turneth away wrath
29. \_\_\_\_\_ Do not tell the man carrying you that he stinks
30. \_\_\_\_\_ Frankness, honesty and trust will move mountains
31. \_\_\_\_\_ There is nothing so important that you have to fight for it
32. \_\_\_\_\_ There are two kinds of people in the world, winners and losers
33. \_\_\_\_\_ Call the bear 'Uncle' until you are safely across the bridge
34. \_\_\_\_\_ A little subtlety is better than a lot of force
35. \_\_\_\_\_ Knowledge is power

Now turn to the score sheet and check your score against five different approaches to conflict resolution.

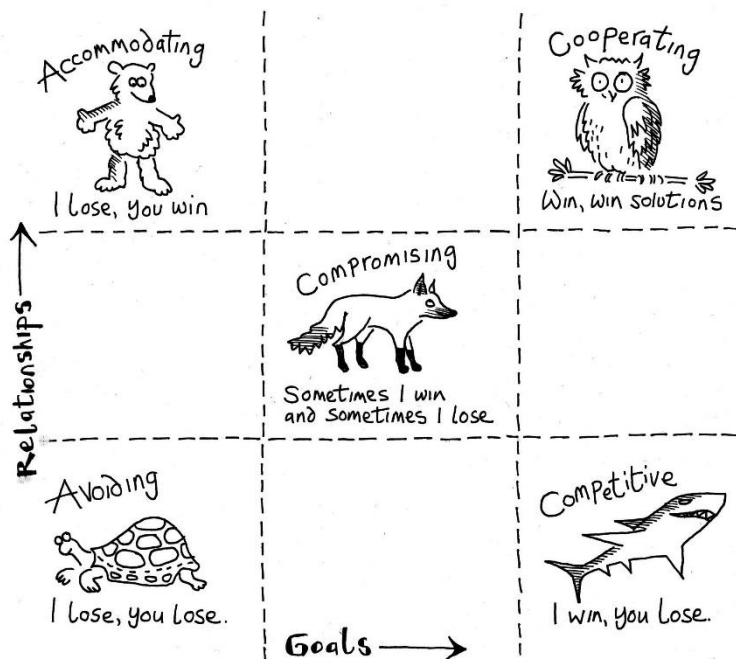
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## CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN PROVERBS: What am I like?

Score Sheet: Which proverbs most closely reflect your conflict resolution strategies?

Avoiding	Competing	Accommodating	Compromising	Co-operating
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total

Each proverb is listed above underneath one of five conflict strategy headings. Write your score for each proverb against the proverb number in the columns above. Then add up your score under each heading. The higher the score for each conflict strategy, the more frequently you tend to use that strategy. The lower the score for each conflict strategy, the less frequently you tend to use that strategy.



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## CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN PROVERBS: What am I like?

Conflict can be seen as the result of a dynamic relationship between **maintaining good relationships with others** and **achieving our own goals**. The diagram on the previous page illustrates five different styles arranged according to the extent to which we are either building good relationships – or pursuing our own goals.

- So we can see that by **avoiding conflict** we are neither building good relationships with others, nor are we achieving our own goals. Like a **tortoise** we stay within our shell, doing nothing.
- On the other hand, the **shark** represents a conflict resolution style that is **only interested in achieving its own goals**, and doesn't care about its relationships with others – it just eats them!
- The cuddly **teddy bear** is so **interested in other people's needs**, it has forgotten about its own goals -
- while the crafty **fox** works out ways in which it can **achieve its own goals without confrontation**.
- Meanwhile the wise **owl** sees that the most sustainable solution is one in which **both parties' needs can be satisfied** – thus achieving its own goals and building good relationships simultaneously.

This model helps us understand the difference between compromise and consensus – in a compromise, we are giving up something to reach agreement, whilst for consensus, we are working together to find a solution which is better for both of us. There are situations in which each of these styles is appropriate, and they all have their advantages and drawbacks. However we all have our habitual responses to conflict situations, so it's helpful to identify what they are, and to recognise that other styles may be more appropriate. What do you think might be the advantages and drawbacks of each of these approaches?

### Accommodating (I lose, you win)

- unassertive, selfless
- powerless
- plays up responsibilities
- plays down rights

### Avoiding (I lose, you lose)

- non-assertive, uncooperative
- does not address the issue
- sidestepping
- tactical withdrawal
- but survives!

### Compromising (sometimes I win, sometimes you win)

- we both give up something
- expediency
- splitting the difference
- taking it in turns

### Competitive (I win, you lose)

- aggressive and un-cooperative
- pursuing own concerns
- standing up for own rights
- trying to win

### Co-operating (I win, you win)

- assertive and cooperative
- explore differences to find underlying concerns
- clear agreements