

# Conflict management concepts and strategies for preceptors

Conflict is bound to occur in PHN/client relationships. Conflicts arise from a difference in beliefs, ideas, or interests. While challenging, conflict presents an opportunity to connect and consider various approaches to achieve mutual goals. Different conflict management styles are appropriate at different times, and there are pros and cons to each style.

## Approaches to conflict resolution

In determining which conflict management style to use for a specific situation, recognize your own usual style of conflict resolution and be open to using another style when needed. Five basic conflict management styles are described in the literature (Lambert, 2018):

1. **Competing:** Conflict is viewed as a challenging and exciting experience. The individual believes in the correctness of their position and actively pursues those beliefs in a competitive fashion.
2. **Accommodating:** Conflict situations are handled by agreeing with the other party. Maintaining friendly relationships with other people is the primary goal.
3. **Avoiding:** Conflict is not addressed, and withdrawal is the dominant behavior. The retreator does not pursue their or anyone's concerns.
4. **Compromising:** Conflict is seen as an opportunity to negotiate, using the idea that "half a loaf is better than none." Compromising involves the willingness to give up something if the other side will also give up something.
5. **Collaborating:** Conflict is perceived as mutual problem solving through which the needs and interests of all parties are equally considered. The goal is to achieve a solution where all can agree.

## Advice/skills to resolve conflicts

The key to a successful outcome is to remain calm and seek to understand the root of the conflict. Time is essential—resolving conflict takes time. To resolve a conflict, begin by engaging with the person or people involved in the conflict. Creating a connection helps lower defenses. To resolve conflict, consider using the acronym PEARLA to create a connection:

- Presence
- Empathy
- Acknowledgment
- Reflect or reframe
- Listen openly
- Ask questions  
(Gerardi, 2015)

Once you identify conflict causes and issues, you might try techniques from motivational interviewing like open-ended questions, affirmation, reflective listening, and summarizing. For more information on motivational interviewing, visit [Motivational interviewing: A communication best](#)