11.5: What Does Each Approach Need?

There are times when others may take an approach that is not helpful to the situation. However, the only person that you can control in a conflict is yourself. It is important to be flexible and shift your approach according to the situation and the other people with whom you are working. When someone else is taking an approach that is not beneficial to the situation, it is critical to understand what needs underlie the decision to take that approach. Here are a few examples:

**Avoiders** may need to feel physically and emotionally safe. When dealing with avoiders, try taking the time to assure them that they are going to be heard and listened to.

**Competitors** may need to feel that something will be accomplished in order to meet their goals. When dealing with competitors, say for example, “We will work out a solution; it may take some time for us to get there.”

**Compromisers** may need to know that they will get something later. When dealing with compromisers, say for example, “We will go to this movie tonight, and next week you can pick.” (Be true to your word.)

**Accommodators** may need to know that no matter what happens during the conversation, your relationship will remain intact. When dealing with accommodators, say for example, “This will not affect our relationship or how we work together.”

**Collaborators** may need to know what you want before they are comfortable sharing their needs. When dealing with collaborators, say for example, “I need this, this, and this . . . . What do you need?”

**Essential Learning Activity 11.4.1**

Take an online test by Bacal and Associates from their webpage [Conflict Quizzes and Assessments](https://med.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Nursing/Book%3A_Leadership_and_Influencing_Change_in_Nursing_(Wagner)/11%3A_Leadership_and_Influencing_Change_in_Nursing_(Wagner)/11.4.1) to find out your preferred approach to conflict.
All approaches to conflict can be appropriate at some times, and there are times when they can be overused. It is important to take the time to consider which approach would be most beneficial to the situation in question. Taking the wrong approach can escalate conflict, damage relationships, and reduce your ability to effectively meet goals. The right approach will build trust in relationships, accomplish goals, and de-escalate conflict.

Everyone has the capacity to use each approach to conflict and to shift from his or her natural style as needed. We react with our most dominant style when we are under stress, but other styles can be learned and applied with practice and self-awareness. When dealing with others who may not have developed their capacity to shift from their preferred style of conflict, it is important to listen for their underlying needs. By understanding the needs that exist beneath the surface of the conflict, you can work with the other person toward a common goal.