



TKI Conflict Workbook

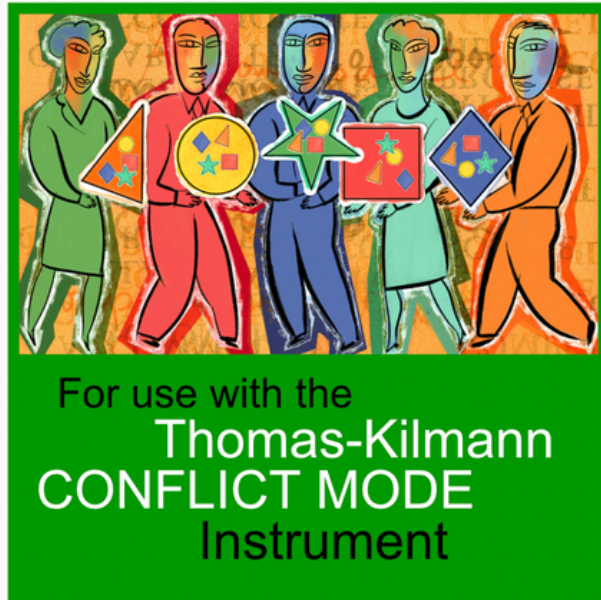
Understand YOUR Conflict Mode

June 17, 2025



Prepared by Cecylia Anderson

What is TKI



Thomas Kilmann Conflict mode Instrument (TKI) - was developed by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann in the early 1970s. It is based on theoretical refinements by Kenneth Thomas of a model of conflict styles proposed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton in the 1960s (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

It observes 5 Conflict Handling Modes to help you understand YOUR style of conflict & to teach us how/when other modes of conflict might be appropriate



Who am I?



Cecylia Anderson

Career & Leadership Coach

Cecylia is a certified leadership and career coach with a background in HR, including her work with the Fraser Health Authority, and advanced training in conflict resolution through the Justice Institute of British Columbia, Clear Leadership, and TKI (Thomas-Kilmann Instrument) certification. She supports high-achieving, sensitive professionals in navigating tough work dynamics with clarity, confidence, and grace.



Quick Conflict Style QUIZ (not TKI Instrument)

When conflict arises, what's most important to you?

- a) Being heard and getting results
- b) Finding a win-win where everyone feels good
- c) Meeting in the middle quickly
- d) Keeping the peace and avoiding tension
- e) Making sure others are okay, even if it costs me something

How do you typically respond when someone strongly disagrees with you?

- a) Stand your ground and make your case
- b) Try to deeply understand their perspective and share yours too
- c) Look for common ground to move forward
- d) Change the subject or leave the conversation
- e) Back down to preserve the relationship

How comfortable are you with direct confrontation?

- a) Very comfortable—I don't shy away from it
- b) Comfortable if it leads to better outcomes for all
- c) Somewhat comfortable, as long as it's quick
- d) Uncomfortable—I usually avoid it
- e) I prefer to soothe things rather than confront

If a teammate pushes an idea you strongly disagree with, what do you do?

- a) Push back and explain why your idea is better
- b) Invite a joint discussion to explore both sides
- c) Propose a compromise to meet halfway
- d) Let it go—it's not worth the fight
- e) Support their idea to avoid tension, even if you disagree

What's your biggest fear in conflict?

- a) Losing control or being seen as weak
- b) Damaging trust or missing a better solution
- c) Wasting time on long arguments
- d) Emotional fallout or discomfort
- e) Hurting someone's feelings or being disliked

How do you feel after you've 'won' an argument?

- a) Validated—I was right and it paid off
- b) Curious—was there a way we could both have gained more?
- c) Satisfied—but wonder if we could've saved time
- d) Uneasy—it wasn't worth the stress
- e) Guilty—I hope the other person is okay

Quick Conflict Style QUIZ cont...

In a group decision, how do you behave if no one agrees?

- a) Try to convince them of your view
- b) Ask questions and propose ways to build consensus
- c) Offer a middle-ground solution
- d) Withdraw and let them decide
- e) Go along with what the group wants

When a conflict gets emotional or intense, what do you tend to do?

- a) Push through—it's part of standing up for what matters
- b) Stay engaged, but focus on emotional regulation
- c) Try to cool things down with a compromise
- d) Exit the conversation or disengage
- e) Try to calm the other person and de-escalate

When you reflect on past conflicts, what pattern do you notice?

- a) I often end up 'winning'—but not always with full buy-in
- b) I seek depth and resolution, even if it takes time
- c) I prioritize fairness and efficiency
- d) I often stay quiet or step back
- e) I tend to yield or absorb others' stress

Which outcome matters more: your needs being met or the relationship being preserved?

- a) My needs being met
- b) Both—we can aim for mutual gain
- c) A fair balance of both
- d) The relationship—my needs can wait
- e) The relationship—even if my needs are never voiced

Scoring Instructions

For each question, assign yourself a point for the letter you chose:

- A = Competing
- B = Collaborating
- C = Compromising
- D = Avoiding
- E = Accommodating
-

Once you've answered all 10 questions, count how many times you selected each letter. Your highest-scoring style is likely your go-to conflict mode.

If two styles are tied, that suggests you might flex between them depending on the situation.

*My conflict style is*_____



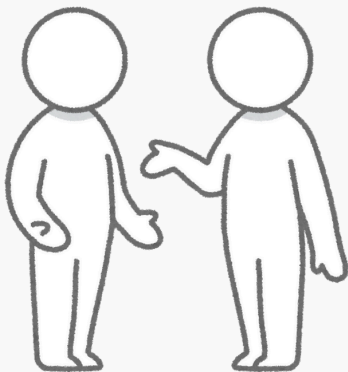
What is Conflict?

TKI Definition

Any situation in which your views/desires are not in agreement with another person's and there is the perception that if his/her desires/views are met, then yours will not be.



Disagreement



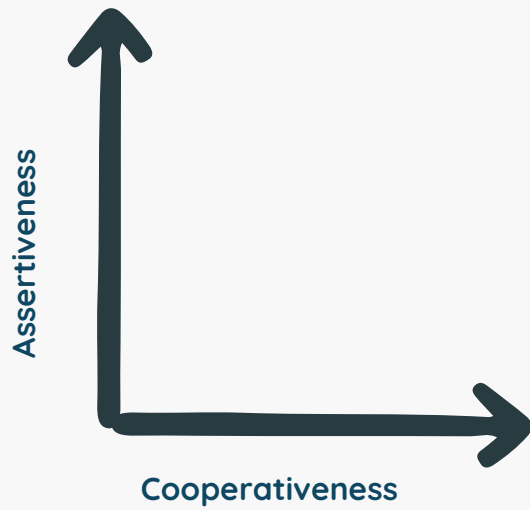
Argument



Conflict

Can be healthy or unhealthy. It can look many ways.

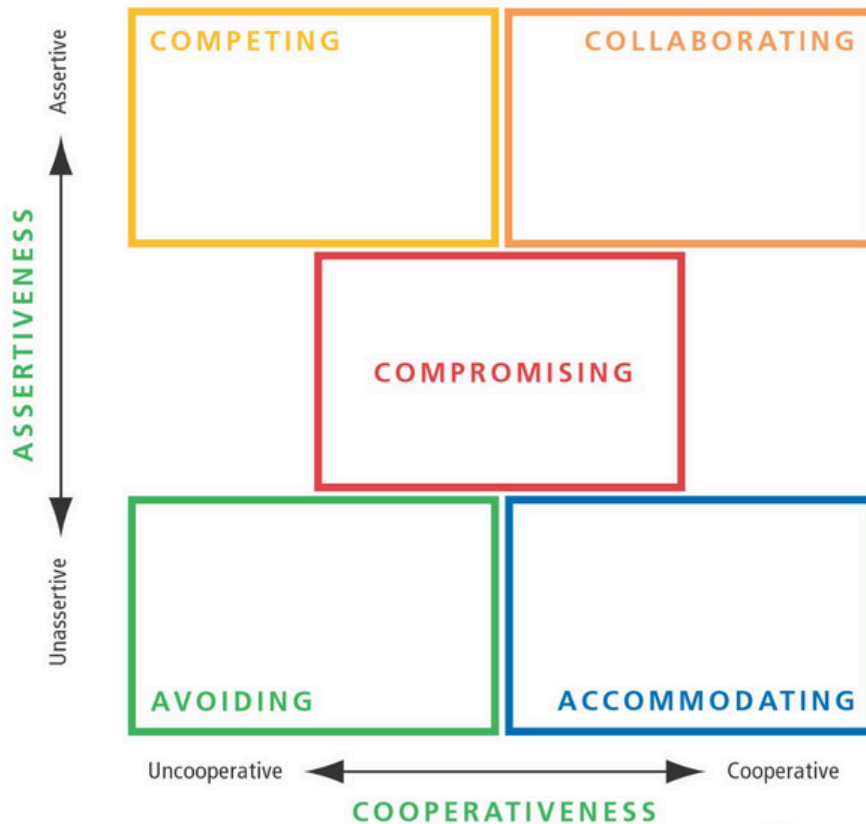
Understanding Conflict Modes



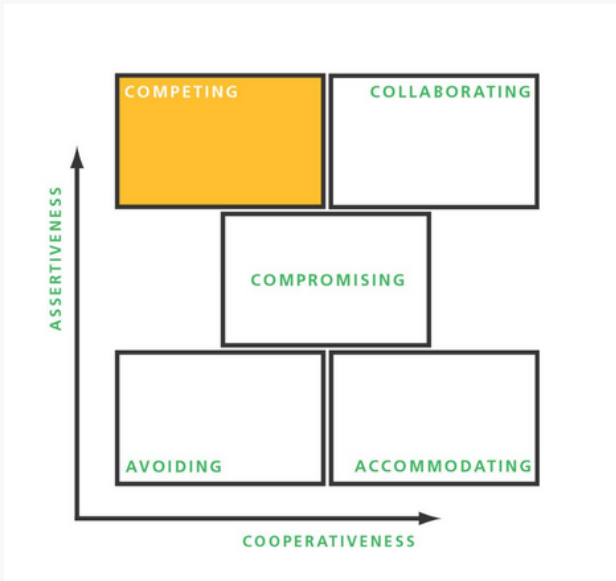
Two Basic Aspects of ALL
Conflict Handling Modes

Situation + Skill = Your Conflict Code

TKI 5 Modes of Conflict



“MY WAY OR THE HIGHWAY”



- Taking quick action
- Making unpopular decisions
- Standing up for vital issues
- Protecting yourself

COMPETING Skills

- Arguing and/or Debating
- Standing your ground
- Asserting your opinion and feelings
- Using rank, position or influence
- Stating your position clearly

WHEN DO I USE COMPETING?

WHAT SITUATION COULD I USE COMPETING?

Overusing **COMPETING?**

- Lack of feedback, opinions or challenge
- Reduce learning
- Low empowerment
- Surrounded by 'YES' people



Underusing **COMPETING?**

- Restricted Influence
- Delayed Action
- Indecision
- Withholding Contribution

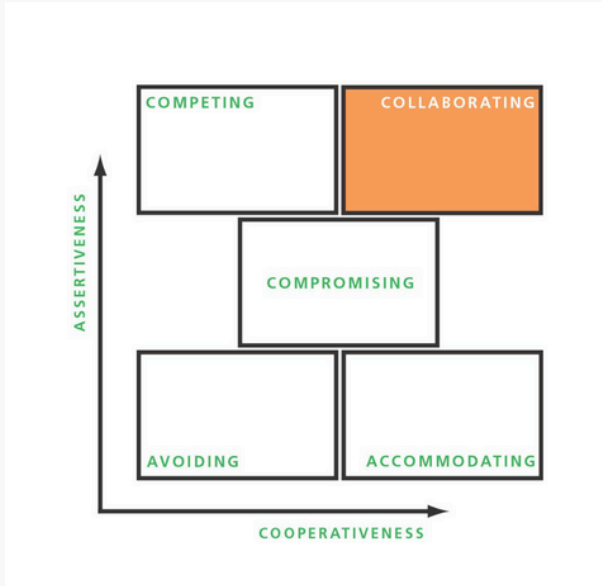
WHEN AM I USING COMPETING TOO MUCH?

WHEN COULD I BE USING COMPETING MORE?

WHAT AM I TRYING TO PROTECT OR ACHIEVE WHEN I COMPETE?

WHERE AM I HOLDING BACK FROM SPEAKING UP - EVEN WHEN I KNOW I'M RIGHT?

“TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE”



- Integrating solutions
- Learning
- Merging Perspectives
- Gaining Commitment
- Improving Relationships

COLLABORATING Skills

- Ability to listen, understand and empathize
- Non threatening confrontation
- Input analysis
- Identifying underlying concerns

WHEN DO I USE COLLABORATING?

WHAT SITUATIONS COULD I USE COLLABORATING?

Overusing COLLABORATING?

- Too much time in trivial matters
- Diffuse responsibility
- People are taking advantage
- Work overload



Underusing COLLABORATING?

- Lack of commitment from others
- Low empowerment
- Loss of innovation

WHEN AM I USING COLLABORATING TOO MUCH?

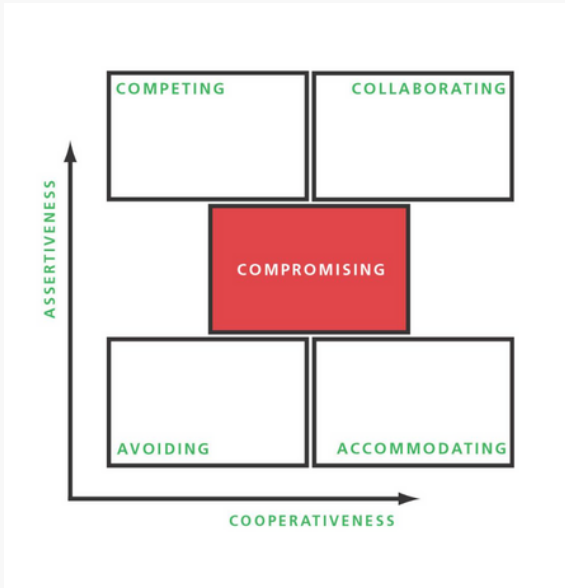
WHEN COULD I BE USING COLLABORATING MORE?

WHEN IS IT WORTH TAKING MORE TIME TO FIND A WIN-WIN?

WHEN MIGHT I BE COMPLICATING THINGS BY OVER-COLLABORATING?

“LET’S MAKE A DEAL”

- For Issues that are moderately important
- Want solution with equal power and commitment
- Creating temporary solutions
- Time constraints
- Backing up competing or collaborating



COMPROMISING Skills

- Negotiating
- Finding a middle ground
- Making concessions
- Assessing Value

WHEN DO I USE COMPROMISING?

WHAT SITUATIONS COULD I USE COMPROMISING?

Overusing COMPROMISING?

- Loss of big picture perspective
- Lack of trust
- Cynical Climate



Underusing COMPROMISING?

- Unnecessary confrontations
- Frequent power struggles
- Inability to negotiate effectively

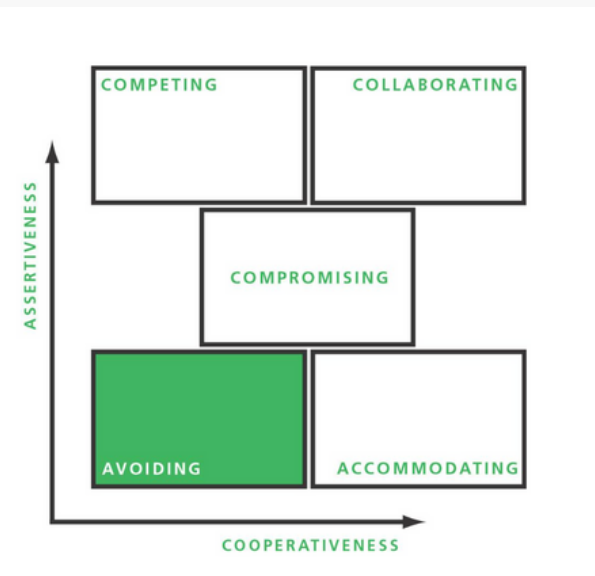
WHEN AM I USING COMPROMISING TOO MUCH?

WHEN COULD I BE USING COMPROMISING MORE?

WHEN DO I SETTLE TOO QUICKLY JUST TO KEEP THE PEACE?

WHAT SITUATIONS DESERVE A QUICK, FAIR TRADE OFF?

“I’LL THINK ABOUT IT LATER”



- Leaving unimportant issues alone
- Reducing tension
- Buying time
- Knowing your limitations
- Allowing others ownership

AVOIDING Skills

- Withdrawing
- Sense of timing
- Sidestepping
- Ability to leave things unresolved

WHEN DO I USE AVOIDING TOO MUCH?

WHAT SITUATIONS COULD I USE AVOIDING?

Overusing AVOIDING?

- Lack of input from you
- Decisions are made by default
- Festering Issues



Underusing AVOIDING?

- Hostility and hurt feelings
- Work overload
- Lack of prioritization/delegation

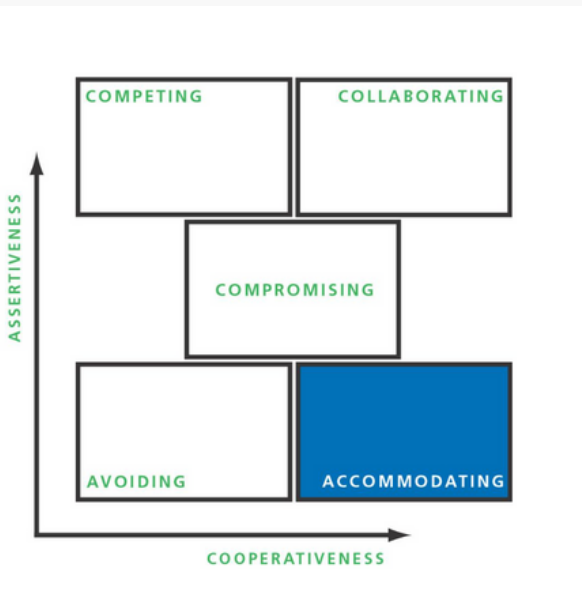
WHEN AM I USING AVOIDING TOO MUCH?

WHEN COULD I BE USING AVOIDING MORE?

WHAT AM I HOPING TO PROTECT BY AVOIDING THIS CONFLICT?

WHEN HAS STEPPING BACK GIVEN ME CLARITY OR HELPED DE-ESCALATE A SITUATION?

“IT WOULD BE MY PLEASURE”



- Showing reasonableness
- Developing Performance
- Creating good will
- Keeping the peace
- Retreating

ACCOMODATING Skills

- Forgoing your desires
- Selflessness
- Obedience
- Ability to yield

WHEN DO I USE ACCOMODATING TOO MUCH?

WHAT SITUATIONS COULD I USE ACCOMODATING?

Overusing ACCOMODATING?

- Overlooked ideas
- Restricted influence
- Loss of contribution
- Anarchy



Underusing ACCOMODATING?

- Lack of rapport
- Low morale
- By the book reputation
- Inability to yield.

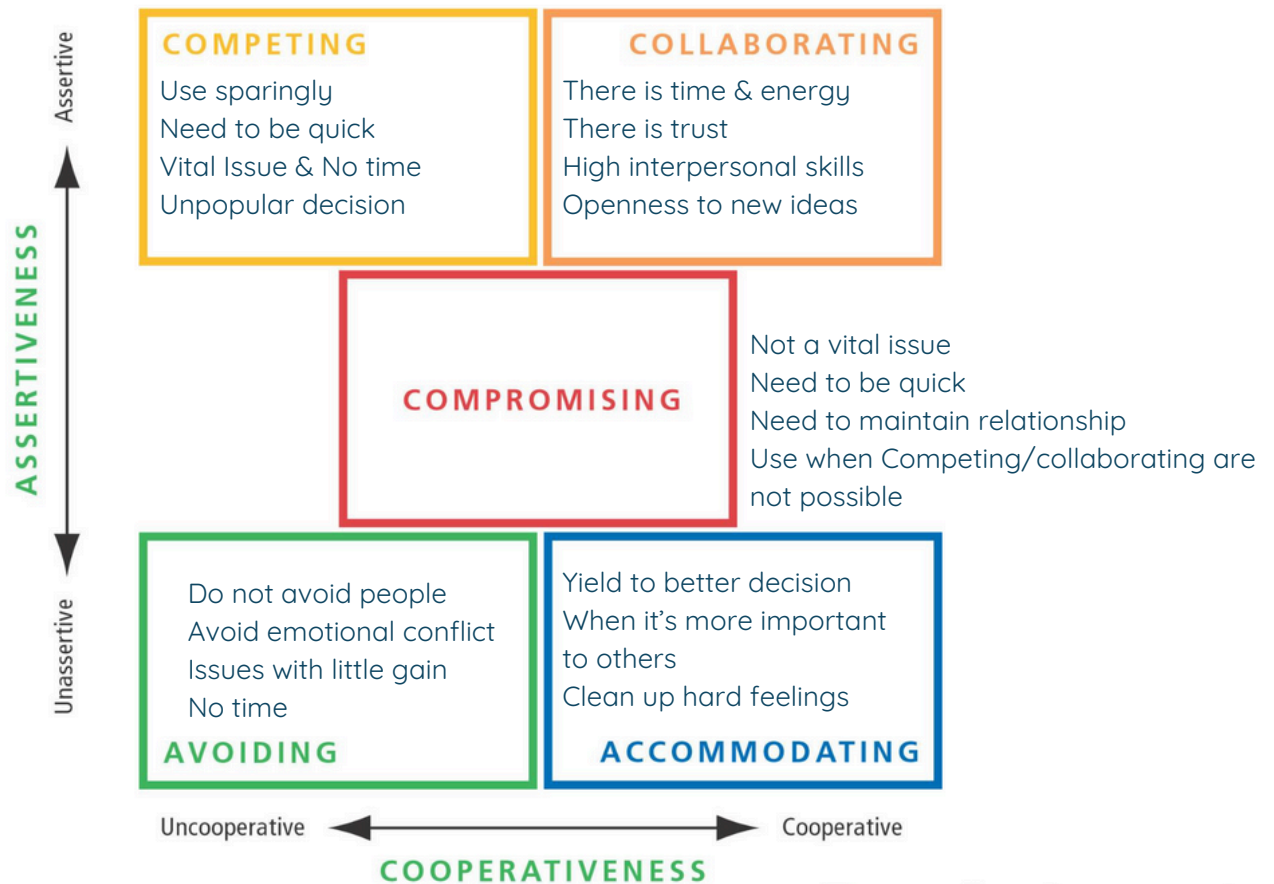
WHEN AM I USING ACCOMODATING TOO MUCH?

WHEN COULD I BE USING ACCOMODATING MORE?

WHERE AM I CONSISTENTLY PUTTING OTHERS' NEEDS AHEAD OF MY OWN?

WHERE COULD I LET GO OF BEING RIGHT IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE RELATIONSHIP?

When to use



Evaluating Situations

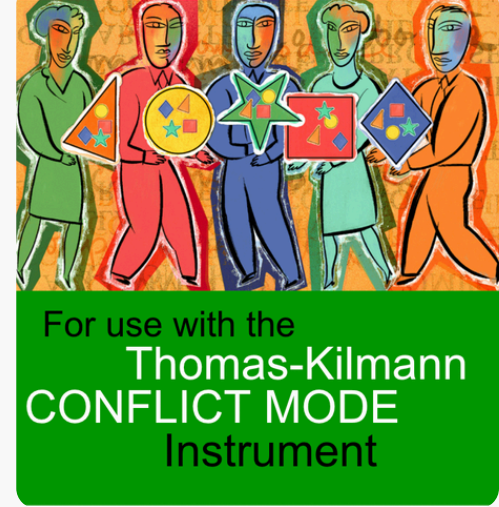


- Is There Overwhelming Stress?
- Is the Conflict Simple or Complex?
- How important is the Topic?
- Is there Sufficient Time?
- Is there Sufficient Trust?
- Do People Have Good Listening and Communications Skills?
- Do Cultural Norms and the Reward System Encourage People to Share Their True Needs and Concerns?
- How Important Is the Relationship to Both People?

RESOURCES

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Model Overviews

- The official Thomas-Kilmann website (kilmanndiagnostics.com) has free blog articles and charts explaining each conflict style, the two axes (assertiveness/cooperativeness), and when to use each mode.



Books Based on TKI or Compatible Frameworks

1. "Introduction to Conflict Management" by Kenneth Thomas

- Written by one of the creators of the TKI, this book walks through the five modes in depth and includes exercises—without requiring the formal instrument.

2. "People Styles at Work...And Beyond" by Robert Bolton

- Not TKI-specific, but complements it well—especially useful for learning how different styles clash and how to communicate across styles.

Informal Self-Assessments

While not official, these self-assessments mirror the TKI intent:

- United States Institute of Peace – Conflict Styles Assessment
 - Free, simple quiz with explanations of each style.
 - <https://www.usip.org/public-education/students/conflict-styles-assessment>
- Beyond Intractability Conflict Style Quiz
 - Another unofficial quiz with useful breakdowns.
 - <https://www.beyondintractability.org/test/conflict-style>
- Leadership IQ – Conflict Style Test
 - Slightly more business-oriented, but still helpful.
 - <https://www.leadershipiq.com/blogs/leadershipiq/41263745-quiz-whats-your-conflict-management-style>