SOURCES OF CONFLICT

ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS
Stressors in the environment can be lack of resources, unfavorable work or living conditions, lack of time, or difficulty of a task. These stressors make it difficult for a person to perform easily and can thus cause conflict.

PERSONAL TRIGGERS
Personal triggers are a person’s own prejudices, ideas, experiences, or unconfirmed assumptions that give rise to conflict with certain groups, behaviors, or situations.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES
Individual differences, such as differing personalities, attitudes, cultures, opinions, work styles and priorities can cause disagreements or misunderstandings, which can lead to conflict.

COMMUNICATION GAPS
Gaps in communication can occur when communication is lacking or unclear. These gaps can be caused by differences in expectations that are not clearly voiced or also by a difference in culture between the two parties. Often when we make assumptions about what another person means or intends based on what they expressed or didn’t express, there is a communication gap occurring. If assignment expectations are unclear seek clarification from course faculty or residents.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES
(According to Thomas-Kilmann)

Competing is assertive and uncooperative, a power-oriented mode. When competing, an individual pursues their own concerns at another person’s expense. They may use whatever power seems appropriate to win their position. Competing might mean standing up for your rights or the welfare of a patient.

Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative. When collaborating, an individual attempts to work with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both. It involves digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative that meets both sets of concerns. This might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other’s insights, resolving some condition that would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. When compromising, an individual has the objective of finding an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. Compromising falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating, giving up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding but doesn’t explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative. When avoiding, an individual does not immediately pursue his or her own concerns or those of the other person. He or she does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

Accommodating is unassertive and cooperative—the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person’s order when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another’s point of view.

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STRATEGIES TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

LISTEN BEFORE YOU SPEAK
• Take a step back and listen.
• Look beyond the attack and understand the reason.
• Resist the urge to attack back.
• Look at the facts.
• Do not assign blame.
• Share your expectations and ideas.
• Empathize and learn their perspective.

LOOK FOR THE BEST
• Look for the best in the situation instead of wishing it away.
• Be curious about the conflict and what you may have missed seeing.
• Take a step back if things are getting worse.

LEARN AND PLAN
• Learn what the real problem is and what solutions can be used.
• Be clear about the solution and how you plan to execute it.
• Plan for future conflicts and how to resolve them.

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

FREE YOUR MIND
Take 2 minutes to do nothing and relax at the start and end of your day.

CONTROL YOUR DAY
Deal with tough situation when you are at your peak.

MIX THINGS UP
Change things around to release stress.

REMEMBER THE REASON
Remember that no one likes conflict and there is a reason you need to uncover.