Strategies for Managing Conflict

There are several approaches to conflict management, each having its own benefits. In small groups, however, the strategies of compromise & collaboration are probably the most effective.

Avoidance

Avoidance is effective to use with conflict when

* the issue is trivial
* the situation will take care of itself
* time is limited
* saving face (yours or someone else's) is important

Avoidance is not effective to use with conflict when

* the problem is important

* the problem will not resolve itself & may worsen if neglected

* credibility would be lost by avoidance

* there is a larger, underlying issue that is important to address

Competition

Competition would be an effective strategy when

.*the issue outWeighs the relationship

.*a competitive interaction would result in a better solution

*encouraging competition will clarify the issue and expose weak spots

*you want one person to prevail over another but you cannot declare your opinion publicly

Competition is not an effective strategy when

*long-term relationships are important

* conflict is likely to become personal rather than remaining issue-oriented

* it is important to avoid a win-lose situation or public defeat

Accommodation

Accommodation is effective to use with conflict when

.* the relationship is more important than the task
* the issue is trivial

* small concessions will reap further gains (i.e., choose your battles)

Accommodation is not an effective strategy to use with conflict when

* your actions could be interpreted as being condescending

* its use would set an unwise precedent

Compromise

Compromise is an effective strategy to use when

* there is no simple solution
* both parties have strong interest in very different facets of the problem

* there is not enough time for a truly collaborative solution

* the situation is not critical and an adequate solution is good enough

Compromise is not effective to use when

* a dangerous precedent would be set by failure to hold one's ground

* an optimal resolution is possible

* it is important to avoid concessions of any kind

Collaboration

Collaboration is an effective strategy to use when

*the task and the relationship are both very important

* the time, information, & willingness to collaborate are present

* the outcome is exceedingly important

*sufficient trust exists between the parties

Collaboration is not effective to use when

* time, trust, and resources are not available

* the issue is not worthy of the investment of time, energy, and resources