

## **Introduction:**

This activity introduces participants to the Intercultural Conflict Styles and gives them an opportunity to explore their own conflict style and learn about others' styles. To enrich the activity, participants can take the fee-based inventory if time and funding allows, but the activity can still work without taking the inventory. The goal of this activity is to encourage participants to consider how their conflict style has formed over time and how their and others' styles impact conflicts.

## **Objectives:**

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Identify their own Intercultural Conflict Style and reflect on what cultural and personal influences have shaped it.
2. Consider the impact of their Intercultural Conflict Style in personal and professional contexts.
3. Develop comfort level with adapting to other styles.
4. Identify how best to communicate with others who have a different Intercultural Conflict Style than they do.

## **Time:**

1 hour plus 30 minutes for Role Play (optional).

## **Group Size:**

Small group (Role Play in pairs).

## **Materials:**

ICS inventory results and/or familiarity with the Conflict Styles Framework and Descriptions; A large, laminated chart of the Intercultural Conflict Styles Model or a smart board to project the model in the PowerPoint provided in [Downloads](#) on the wall.

## **Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Minimization
- Acceptance

## **AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:**

### Cultural Self-Awareness

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

### Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

## Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences.

## Openness

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

## Other Skills:

Teamwork; Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.

## Activity Instructions:

1. Begin by having participants discover their Intercultural Conflict Style by: 1) Taking the ICS Inventory (either in class or prior to class) if funding is available or 2) Describing the four conflict styles and asking participants to self-identify. Students can either refer to their report for their ICS scores or self-identify.
2. Watch the scene from *Fools Rush In* ("Parents Meet for the First Time") and ask participants to identify the characters' conflict styles.  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpD072xGGJA>)
3. Watch the scene from *Hum Tum* and ask participants to identify the characters' conflict styles.  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dl9o3NohoM>)
4. Ask participants to place themselves (via marker, sticker, etc.) on a large, laminated chart in the front of the room, or via sticky note on the wall where the ICS Model is displayed from the PowerPoint. Do not ask them to write their name – a blank sticky note/sticker or marker dot works well for a simple visualization.
5. Lead a class discussion covering the following questions:
  - How do you view conflict? Do you view it as destructive, as an opportunity, etc.? Why might someone have a differing view than you do of conflict? How does this impact how you evaluate whether a conflict was successful or not?
  - Can you think of a time when you were in a conflict with individuals from the other three quadrants? How did it make you feel? What happened?
  - How do you feel about other conflict styles?

- When/with whom does your style vary the most? Do you ever find yourself moving into different styles depending on context/audience (e.g., with family, friends, at work, etc.).
- How comfortable are you adapting to other styles? Which style is the most difficult for you to perform?
- How might your conflict style impact communication in a personal or professional context?
- How can you use the Intercultural Conflict Model to better understand others and come away from a conflict successfully?

## 6. **Optional:** Role play.

- Engage the group in a discussion to identify a controversial topic about which people may have many differing opinions or, you can instead have a topic chosen prior to facilitating the activity that you will assign to participants. Alternatively, once participants have paired up (in the following instruction bullet point), instruct each pair to identify a topic they would like to debate. Keep in mind that the topic should be one that people care deeply enough about to engage in an actual debate. Frivolous topics (e.g., milk or dark chocolate) are safe, but they won't activate emotions. Encourage authenticity among participants. Participants should not argue for a position they do not agree with (do NOT assign positions to participants).
- Once a topic has been identified, ask participants to pair up and debate the topic using their typical conflict styles, arguing for what they personally believe.
- Then ask participants to debate the topic with one partner using the Dynamic style and the other using the Discussion style, with one partner using the Accommodation style and the other using the Engagement style. As time allows, partners may decide on other combinations to enact.

## 7. **Optional:** Engage the class in a debrief following the role play.

- Was there anything about this experience that made you uncomfortable? What was the most challenging aspect?
- How would you describe the dynamics that played out in your role play? What happened as a result of this difference? How did the role play conclude?
- What aspects of your personal conflict style can be helpful and what aspects might be more challenging for others to interact with?
- Did this activity bring about any realizations you had never considered before?
- What skills will you take away from this that you might apply to a situation where someone has a different style from you?
- How might you handle conflict if you and your boss or you and your significant other have a different style?
- What do you still need to practice to be able to adjust fluidly across different styles?

### **Related Tools:**

- [Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory](#)
- [Intercultural Contact Hypothesis Activity](#)



- [Sample Conflict Situations](#)
- [Types of Conflict & Identifying the Source](#)