

# Mitigating Conflict in Acute Care

## BENEFITS OF UTILIZING A LEGAL NURSE CONSULTANT

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# Disclosure

Kimberly Rhineheimer, MSN, RN, CPN, sole author

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# Learning Objectives

Learner objectives include:

1. Discuss how conflict impacts patient safety
2. Define conflict
3. Give examples of conflict styles
4. Summarize the Joint Commission sentinel events related to conflict

# Purpose

Provide a well thought out research-based response to the Joint Commission's Sentinel Event alerts on conflict standards on disruptive behavior.

# Conflict

“Healthcare facilities are a microcosm of society, where like the general population, patients, family members, and visitors can have financial difficulties, violent histories, and poor coping skills, as well as struggles with behavioral and substance abuse disorders. Add in pain, fear, and interventions involving physical contact, and these factors can create the perfect storm for violence against nurses and healthcare workers” (Trossman, S., 2018, p. 36).

# Conflict Definition

- “an internal misunderstanding that occurs from the differences in thoughts, values, and feelings between two organizations or people” (Kantel & Kartel, 2015, p.63).
- “a social situation where 2 parties struggle with one another due to incompatibilities in perspectives, goals, or values; this struggle impedes the achievement of predetermined goals or objectives” (Ogunyemi et al., 2010, p. 118).



# Conflict Definition

" a dynamic process occurring between interdependent individuals and/or groups as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals" (Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, 2012, p. 5).

# Statistics

- Working in a healthcare facility is considered the third most dangerous job in the United States. (Baker, et. al, 2014).
- Of the 25,000 workers surveyed by OSHA, 75% of workplace assaults happened in health care settings.  
([www.jointcommission.org](http://www.jointcommission.org)).
- 91% of nurses surveyed have experienced verbal abuse.  
(Overston & Lowry, 2013).



# Statistics

- 97% of nurses surveyed experienced degrading comments, yelling, cursing, and inappropriate jokes (McNamara, 2010). 25% of nurses reported being physically assaulted by a patient or patient's family; and 9% reported being concerned for their physical safety at work. (Trousman, 2018).
- Healthcare professionals have faced nonfatal assaults more than any other workforce. (Papa & Venella).
- In the acute care setting, four conflict events happen on average in each operation. (Overton & Lowry, 2013).

# Impact

Conflict can lead to impaired concentration, impeded communication flow, poor staff relationships, and negative team collaboration. (Rosenthal & O'Daniel, 2006).

Conflict can lead to lower self esteem, increased absenteeism, and greater intent to leave nursing. (Almost, J., 2016).

Conflict has been linked to more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of all Joint Commission Sentinel events. (Baker, et al., 2014).

# Impact

The consequences of unresolved conflict include the following (Gerardi, 2004, p 183):

- Less satisfaction of patients and their families
- Less retention of qualified staff
- Poorer clinical outcomes of patients
- Negative effect on organization's financial success

# Theory

# Cognitive Learning Theory

Cognitive Learning theories (also known as Gestalt theories) provide a framework to understand how nurses learn and process information. According to Bastable (2014), one must pay attention to:

- Empathy and moral emotions
- Memory storage, moral decision making
- Self regulation
- Emotional intelligence

# Emotional Intelligence

- When the nurse is able to recognize **their** conflict style -then they are able to utilize this information to become *emotionally intelligent*

# Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to identify, understand, use, and regulate emotions. Research has shown that those with a high degree of emotional intelligence are more likely to use an integrating style of conflict resolution, and then there is a higher concern towards self and others.

(Godse & Thingujam, 2010)



# Peplau's Theory of Interpersonal Relationships

“The belief that interpersonal competencies of nurses are essential to assisting patients to regain health and well-being....these competencies are based on the nurse's ability to understand his or her own behavior” (Jones, 2017, p. 3).



# Thomas and Kilmann Theory

There are five styles of conflict management in relation to the scope of assertiveness and cooperativeness, noting that individuals favor a particular style, and developed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, also known as the TKI. (McKibben, 2017).

***What's your style?***

# Project

# Design

- This survey was given to by hand to 25 day surgery nurses. The survey used a Likert scale to measure responses geared toward identifying five major styles of conflict management techniques.
- The survey was done in “real time” and collected same shift.
- The survey was anonymous.
- This was followed by teaching on how to interpret their identified style.

# Survey

- Provide acute care nurses a survey to identify their conflict style using the Thomas -Killmann conflict tool:

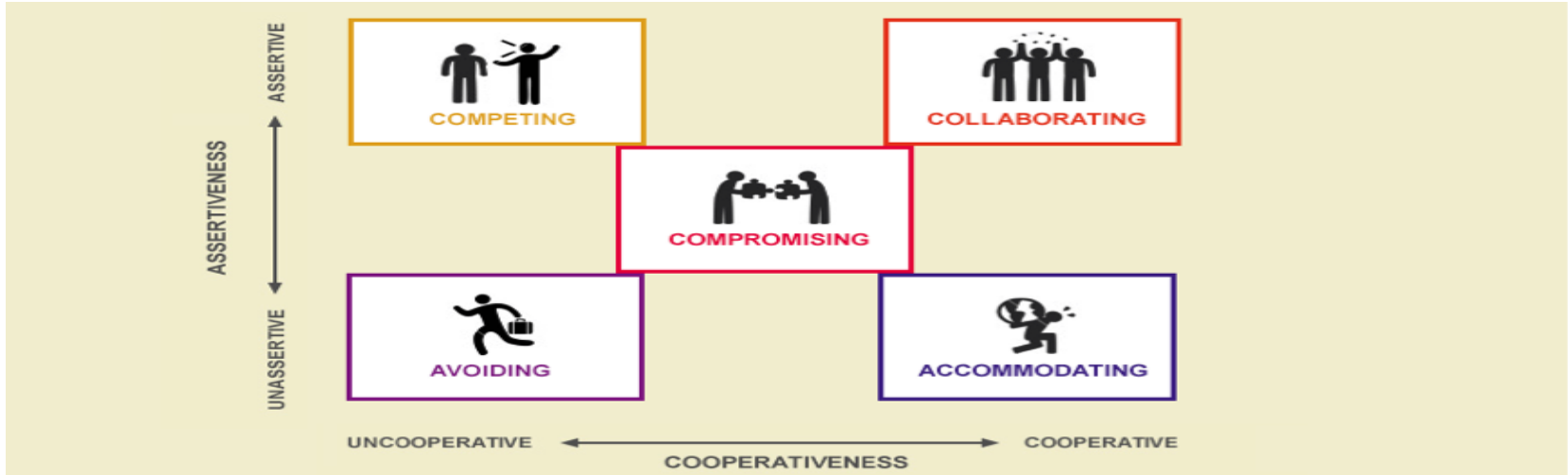


Image retrieved from [www.cpem.com/au](http://www.cpem.com/au)

# Thomas Killman (TKI) Styles

**Competing:** • Assertive, uncooperative, power-oriented •  
Pursues his/her own concerns at the other person's expense •  
Standing up for one's rights, defending a position one believes is correct, or simply trying to win

# Collaborating

- **Collaborating:** • Assertive and cooperative • Attempts to work with another person to find a solution • Exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, resolving some condition that would otherwise have members competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem

# Compromising

- **Compromising** • Both assertive and cooperative • Individual finds an expedient, acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties • Addresses an issue more directly than avoiding it

# Avoiding

- **Avoiding:** • Unassertive and uncooperative • Does not immediately pursue his/her own concerns or those of others • Does not address conflict



# Accommodating

**Accommodating:** • Unassertive and cooperative • The opposite of competing • Neglects his/her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other

(Waite, R., & McKinney, N., 2014, p.124).

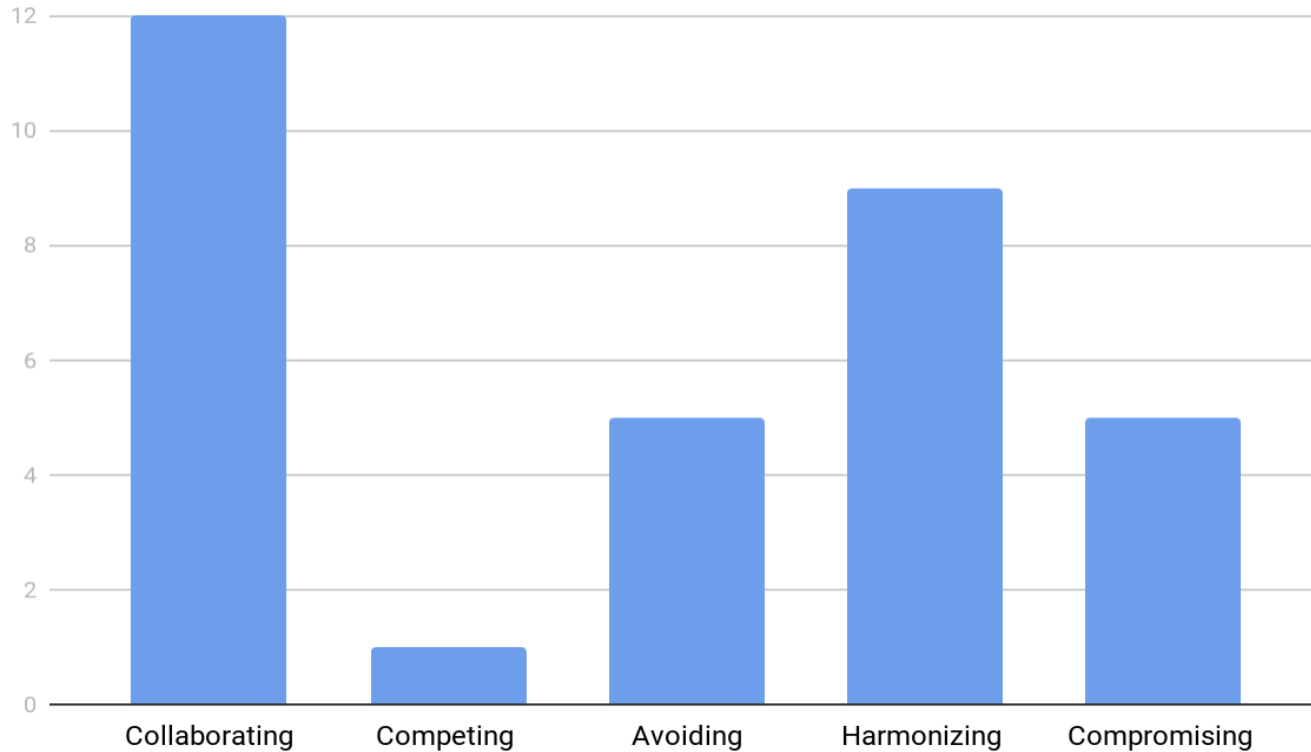
# Goals and Objectives

**Project goal:** Educate acute care nurses about conflict styles.

**Project objectives:** Design a method to identify conflict style and develop a nursing staff model for delivery of educational module.

# Project Results

# Conflict Styles in Acute Care Nurses



# Evaluation

A Likert style evaluation tool was given to assess the value to the conflict style quiz. The tool evaluated the survey, the instructor, and the relevance.

Population included twenty five registered nurses working in a pediatric ambulatory surgical center.

Return rate was 52%, with all responses being either strongly agree or agree, with 2 neutral responses.

# Role of the Legal Nurse Consultant

The legal nurse consultant can serve to provide expertise in the areas of mediation, as the training between the legal and medical arenas provide a unique opportunity for improvements to be made in conflict competency.

# Joint Commission Standards

Sentinel Events alerts numbered 40, 57, and 59 all call attention to conflict in healthcare.

Sentinel Event Alert 40 (2009) entitled: ***Behaviors that undermine a safety of culture***

Sentinel Event Alert 57 (2017) entitled: ***The essential role of leadership in developing a safety culture***

Sentinel Event Alert 59 (2018) entitled: ***Physical and verbal abuse against healthcare workers***

Retrieved from [www.thejointcommmission.org/sentinel](https://www.thejointcommmission.org/sentinel) events

# Nursing Implications

- Any team, no matter the individual conflict styles, can be successful when applying the theory of Morton Deutsch's theory of constructive conflict



# Morton Deutsch's Theory of Constructive Conflict

A social psychologist and researcher in conflict resolution, Morton Deutsch's theory of constructive conflict management is based on 2 basic ideas (Coleman & Deutsch, 2014, p 1825):

1. Interdependence among goals of the people involved in a given situation
2. Type of action that the people involved take

Questions?

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