



Strategies for Conflict Resolution: Negotiating the Mentor-Mentee Dynamic

Daniel Wong, Ph.D.

**Director of Recruitment
and Retention**

**Office of Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion**

Review from Workshop 1

- Discussion of mentoring philosophy
- Discussion of why to be a mentor
- Developing strategies for the first interaction(s)
- Working to set a tone for the relationship

Goals for the Workshop

- Discussing boundaries and maintaining them
- Developing strategies for managing obstacles
- Working to maintain a tone for the relationship

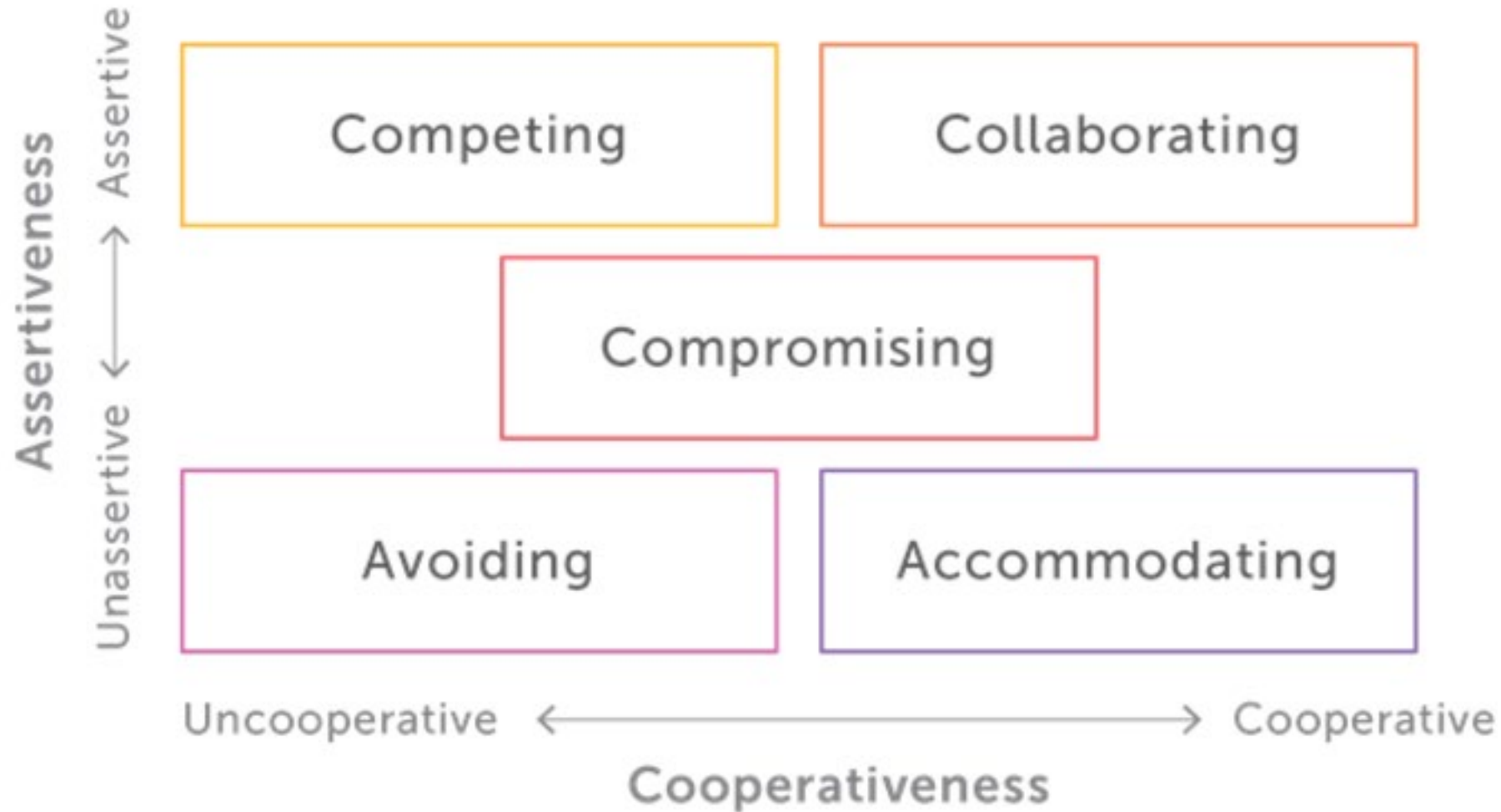
Warm-up

Discussion of Mutual Expectations

Warm-up 2

Identifying your “conflict style”

(Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument)



Identifying Mentee Issues

Boundaries in Mentoring

Identifying Mentee Issues

- Identify one issue—real or anticipated—that could arise in the mentoring relationship
- Summarize it succinctly
- Post
- Exchange

Four before “opening the door”

- Is the behavior creating an unsafe environment for the mentee or the lab?
- Is the behavior negatively affecting productivity or the well-being of the lab?
- Will your mentee be more productive and appreciated if this behavior is modified?
- Is the behavior sufficiently annoying to you that it interferes with your ability to work with the mentee?

Opening the Door

Boundaries in Mentoring

“Solutions” and “Safe Openers”

- Brainstorm solutions to the listed issue
- Brainstorm a “safe opener” to being the conversation/open the door
- Remember: it may all depend on the existing relationship with your mentee

Boundaries in Mentoring

- Does connection to personal life = success?
 - How close is too close?
 - Benefits and drawbacks
 - Friends or professionals?
- Work / life separation?
 - Established “zones” of activity? (Shore, 48)
 - How much information to know? (Shore, 49)
 - When helpful, when too much?

Managing Student Expectations

Boundaries in Mentoring

Setting Realistic Expectations

- The mentor's responsibility
- Provide “wiggle” room and manage *your* expectations
- Check in with mentee regularly to gauge progress
- Plan “escape scripts,” but don't go to them too quickly (Shore, 52)
- Being student centered: “punishment reliably predicts one thing: avoidance” (Shore, 53)
- Model for your students how to say “no”

Negotiating the Academic Space

Remember the Dynamic

- Mentors have the superior status in the dyad and should initiate adjustments (Shore, 57)
- Ask directly about comfort/discomfort in social situations; the onus is on you
- Keep interactions public (the “tabloid” rule about being seen)
- Be careful about all physical interactions

Communicating Hard News

Creating a “safe” environment

- One of the few cases where more privacy may be necessary
- Make extra time for the conversation – don’t rush it
- Be honest about your own dissatisfaction
 - Keep options open
 - Provide a way forward



I ILLINOIS GRADUATE
COLLEGE