

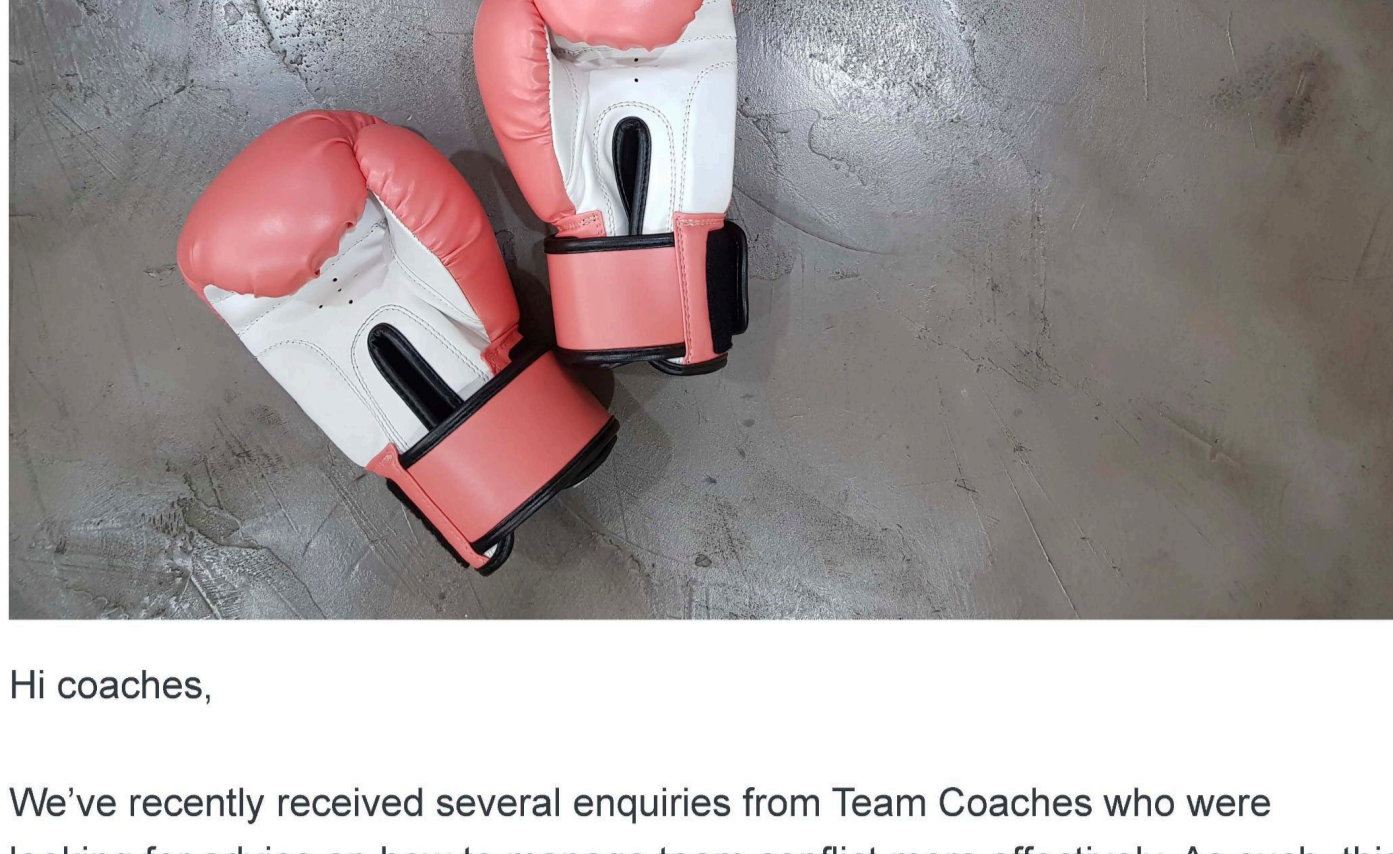


THE ICC ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

THE NEWSLETTER FOR GROWING GREAT COACHES

October 2024

From Tension to Teamwork: Coaching Solutions for Conflict



Hi coaches,

We've recently received several enquiries from Team Coaches who were looking for advice on how to manage team conflict more effectively. As such, this month's newsletter is dedicated to the important topic of conflict.

Conflict within teams is inevitable, but when approached with the right tools and strategies, it can actually *strengthen* relationships and improve performance.

Today we'll explore practical methods and insights to help you navigate conflict as a Team Coach, turning potential challenges into opportunities for growth and collaboration.

What do we fight about?

Though the specifics of conflict will differ from case-to-case, there are common causes of conflict within teams. This includes:

- **Task conflict** – or disagreements about how the work should be completed.
- **Process conflict** – or disagreement about the logistics of task completion, including roles, responsibilities and resourcing.
- **Relationship conflict** – or interpersonal tension due to differences in personality, working styles, values and so forth.
- **Status conflict** – or tension that arises when people occupy different places in the social hierarchy.

Conflict can also [manifest](#):

- Within one individual
- Between two or more individuals
- Between factions of the same team
- Between teams

And conflict can present in different ways. Sometimes it's fiery and explicit, but many times in Kiwi culture, conflict presents as a simmering passive-aggressive tension that intermittently flares up.

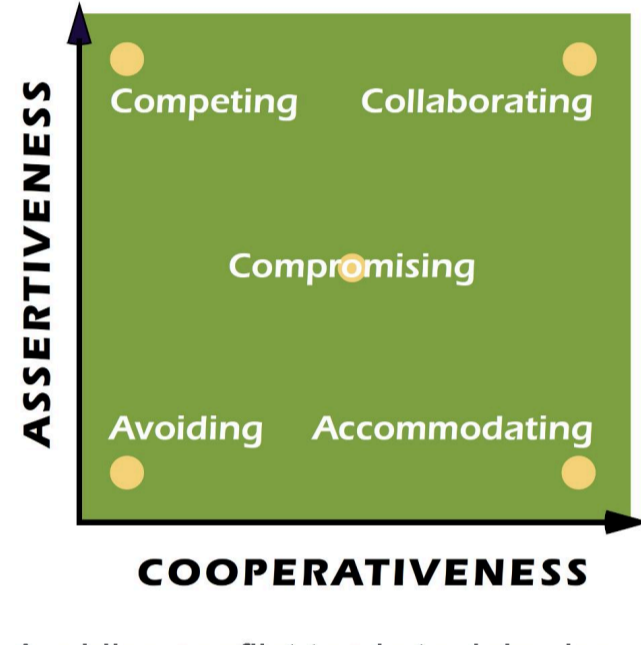
Although conflict can feel very uncomfortable, particularly for us conflict-averse Kiwis, it is normal and it can be harnessed as a constructive force.

What should Team Coaches look out for, when dealing with conflict?

[According to Ralph Kilmann](#), co-developer of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), "if you stay in the conversation, if you work on it, if you're able to create the conditions to have an effective dialogue – you'll be able to be more effective, more productive, and you'll be happier, because you're getting your needs met and helping others meet theirs."

So, what does that mean for you as a Team Coach? When it comes to conflict, it's crucial to guide your team towards productive conversations rather than avoiding them. The TKI model is an excellent diagnostic tool that you can use to help your team understand their conflict styles, and to explore more effective strategies. There are five conflict-handling modes in the TKI model, but not all are equally helpful. Here's a quick guide to help you recognise and manage these behaviours.

The Thomas-Kilman conflict inventory



Avoiding conflict tends to delay issues and causes them to fester, ultimately affecting the team's ability to work well together. Accommodating, where one person gives in to the loudest voice, might smooth things over temporarily but leads to long-term resentment and a loss of team cohesion. Similarly, competing, where everyone is pushing their own agenda, can lead to a breakdown in relationships.

As a Team Coach, you can use the TKI to bring awareness to these patterns and steer the team towards the more constructive approaches of compromising and collaborating. These modes strike the balance between assertiveness and cooperativeness, which is where meaningful and lasting solutions are found.

What's most helpful when dealing with conflict?

To guide a team through conflict, start by helping them manage their emotional states and stay calm under pressure. Encourage them to approach disagreements with curiosity, reframing the conflict as an opportunity for growth. But what does that look like in practice? Let's unpack it further:

Manage your state

The way you 'show up' to a conflict really matters. Encourage team members to:

- **Stay calm.** Taking a few deep breaths activates your parasympathetic nervous system and dials down your stress response.
- **Reframe the issue** by offering helpful thoughts like "It's good we're getting this out in the open." Or "This will be constructive in the long run."
- **Listen actively** as this is "the common denominator in virtually all successful negotiations," according to [experts from Harvard](#). Help the team to explore each person's perspective with a sense of curiosity, ask open-ended questions, and be willing to hear colleagues out. As a Team Coach you can rephrase key points so people feel heard and understood.
- **Use neutral, non-emotive language** insofar as possible. Help team members learn by making observations when emotive statements are being made. For instance, rather than "You're doing X," it's helpful to depersonalise with I-based statements like, "I'm noticing that..." and "Am I right in thinking that...?"

Consider using interest-based negotiation

When we enter a conflict, we often start with a **position** in mind. For instance, if we have two team members talking about flexible work, Mark's position might be that "we should have a mandated return to the office," while Liv's position is that "we should have a hybrid model."

The trouble with positions is that they become intractable – because you can't have both a return-to-office mandate and a hybrid working setup.

So when we see team members in conflict with a fixed position, it's useful to explore each person's **interests**, or what really matters to them.

Using this approach, find out what is of interest to both Mark and Liv – Mark wants people in the office because it's easier to see how busy people are, and to allocate work fairly across the firm. His interest is fair allocation of workload. Liv wants hybrid work because she has seen hybrid become normalised across her industry, and she's worried about attracting and retaining talent. That's her interest.

Once each person's interests are on the table, then you can begin to have a more fruitful conversation, identifying potential trade-offs and win-wins. In fact, Harvard Law School's Program on Negotiation [has found](#) that "interest-based negotiation has proven to be the most reliable way to create value and resolve conflicts."

Once everyone's interests are on the table, it's time to address the challenge collaboratively. A simple tool like ideation or options analysis can help structure the conversation and focus the team on finding a way forward. For example, using a grid to weigh different solutions against key criteria can move a discussion from abstract disagreement to a more concrete, solution-focused space.

Prevention is the best medicine

While conflict is inevitable, the ideal approach is for teams to address potential issues *before they arise*. An effective team coaching framework allows the team to anticipate and manage conflict successfully, with Team Coaches providing guidance and support throughout the process. You can bring in proactive discussions about who does what, how the team allocates work, how they give feedback, how they learn together and celebrate performance – and those conversations set the team up for less friction and greater levels of success.

To finish... the parenting book 'Siblings Without Rivalry' calls for parents to outline each child's interests, and then to step back and let them resolve their conflicts. In one real-life scenario, there were two older girls in the back seat of a car, along with one young boy and 8 jellybeans to share between them. The girls thought a 3-3-2 split was fair, based on size, but the youngest objected to his smaller share. So the kids decided to bring mum into the mix, and divide 8 jellybeans by 4 people, with everyone getting 2.

If little kids can come up with creative solutions for something as important as WHO GETS THE LOLLIES (!) then us adults can too.

We hope you have a wonderful month ahead!

The team at ICC New Zealand

2024-2025 DATES FOR COACH TRAINING

FOUNDATION COACHING Training

October/November 2024

Module 1:

16th and 17th October

Module 2:

30th and 31st October

Module 3:

13th and 14th November

Module 4:

27th and 28th November

February/March 2025

Module 1:

21st and 22nd of February

Module 2:

26th and 27th of February

Module 3:

12th and 13th of March

Module 4:

26th and 27th of March



ICC Academy

545 Parnell Road, 1052, Auckland

This email was sent to {{ contact.EMAIL }}
You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[Unsubscribe](#)

