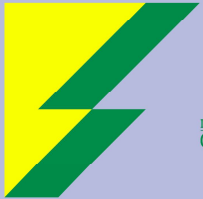

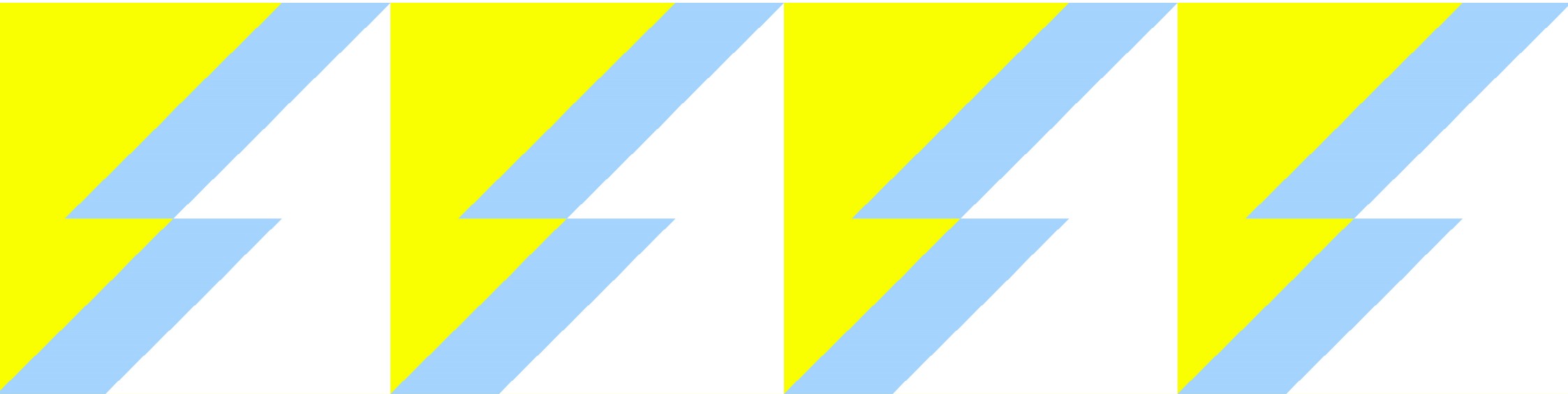


# FEMSTEM



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# Conflict Management

Short course on how to manage conflicts  
in professional environments

# Learning Objectives



- ❑ This short course focuses on conflict management and the topic was suggested during co-creation sessions organized in Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania and Spain.
- ❑ By the end of the course, learners will gain hands-on experience and acquire the necessary understanding of conflict management. By the end of the course, learners will be equipped with the tools to build strong relationships and resolve conflict. This course has been to both be a self-paced course and it can also be used as a tool for mentors and mentees of the FemStem project.



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# Conflict Management Overview



Conflict Management is one of the most crucial soft skills that can be invaluable for female professionals in all professional settings, including women entrepreneurs, academics and other **fields**. **It is a valuable skill** not just in the business world but also in various aspects of life. As a **woman professional**, you may encounter diverse perspectives and thought processes, which can sometimes lead to disagreements and conflicts with team members, business partners, or stakeholders.



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# Understanding the Nature of Conflict

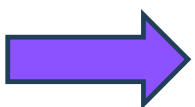
According to the Oxford Dictionary, conflict is defined as “a serious incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles or interests”.



# Importance of Conflict Management



Understanding conflict is essential, as it arises from differing viewpoints and perceptions. As a female entrepreneur, being aware of the potential causes of conflict can help you navigate challenging situations more effectively, how to sustain a thriving business and maintain healthy relationships.



By acquiring conflict management skills, you can approach conflicts as opportunities for growth and resolution, rather than seeing them as solely negative situations. Resolving conflicts in a constructive manner can lead to better team cohesion, increased productivity, and improved business outcomes.



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# The Nature of Conflict



Understanding the nature of conflict is paramount in effective conflict management.

1

Conflict, whether in interpersonal relationships, workplaces, or broader societal contexts, arises from the clash of differing opinions, interests, or goals. It is an inherent part of human interaction and can stem from various sources, such as misunderstandings, competition for resources, or contrasting values.

2

Recognizing that conflict is a natural and inevitable occurrence allows individuals and groups to approach it with greater empathy and open-mindedness. By comprehending its underlying causes and dynamics, conflict resolution strategies can be tailored appropriately, fostering constructive communication, compromise, and mutual understanding.

3

Emphasizing the significance of comprehending conflict's intricacies enables us to transform tense situations into opportunities for growth, collaboration, and positive change.



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# Common Causes of Workplace Conflict

## Cause 1: Conflicting Resources

Scarce resources: Conflict can arise when multiple individuals or groups require access to limited resources like meeting rooms, office supplies, or the boss' time.

## Cause 2: Conflicting Styles

Differences in work styles: Each individual has their own unique way of working based on their needs and personality, which can lead to conflicts when working together.

## Cause 3: Conflicting Perceptions

Conflicting perceptions: People can have different interpretations of the same situation, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts.



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# Common Causes of Workplace Conflict



## Cause 4: Different Personal Values

People differ on their personal values, especially considering the cultural diversity in today's workplace. These differences can cause segregation and conflict.

## Cause 5: Unpredictable Policies

Clear policies and rules are important to avoid confusion and misunderstandings. The absence of clear policies and guidelines can create an environment of uncertainty and conflict.



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## Real-life Scenario: Conflict Case Study



Max and Simon were assigned to collaborate on a project. Max likes structure in his work and he sets strict deadlines to himself to be able to perform effectively. On the other hand, Simon works in a more flexible way. The conflict arose due to the differences in their thought process, nature, and attitude.

Such incidents require immediate action.



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# Understanding the nature of conflict

- 1** Understanding the root causes and emotions behind a conflict is crucial for fostering greater sensitivity and patience in its resolution. By gaining insight into the underlying issues, individuals can approach the conflict with empathy and a deeper understanding of each party's perspective.
- 2** Constructive conflict can lead to innovative ideas, enhanced problem-solving, and improved relationships. It encourages individuals to acknowledge that conflicts may emerge due to diverse perspectives and experiences, fostering a more inclusive approach to conflict resolution.
- 3** Understanding the nature of conflict helps to dispel misconceptions and negative connotations often associated with it. Rather than viewing conflict as something to be avoided at all costs, individuals and organizations can recognize its potential benefits.
- 4** Embracing conflict with an open mind and a willingness to comprehend different viewpoints is key to finding common ground and reaching amicable solutions. It involves empathetic listening and open communication, which are essential tools for resolving conflicts effectively.



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# Conflict Resolution Techniques



Conflict resolution techniques are invaluable tools that help individuals, groups, and communities navigate disagreements and disputes in a constructive and productive manner.



## Active listening

is a fundamental technique that involves giving the other person(s) involved your undivided attention. By truly hearing their concerns, emotions, and underlying interests, you demonstrate a genuine willingness to understand their perspective.

## Collaboration

is an effective method that encourages parties to work together to find common ground. Instead of focusing solely on individual interests, collaboration emphasizes the importance of brainstorming creative solutions that address the needs of all parties involved.

## Compromise

is often employed to reach a middle ground where both sides make concessions. While it may not fulfil every desire completely, it allows for a balanced resolution that benefits all parties to some extent.

## The win-win approach

takes collaboration a step further by seeking solutions where both parties can gain something positive. This approach prioritizes long-term relationships and encourages open communication.



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# Conflict Resolution Techniques

5

## Avoidance

is utilized as a temporary strategy to de-escalate highly emotional situations. Taking a break from the conflict can provide individuals with the space they need to cool off before returning to address the issue more constructively.

6

## Mediation

involves the presence of a neutral third party who facilitates communication between conflicting parties. The mediator guides the conversation, ensures both sides are heard, and helps generate potential solutions.

7

## Assertiveness and respect

are vital in conflict resolution. It involves expressing your needs and boundaries clearly while acknowledging the feelings and opinions of others.

8

## Focusing on the issue rather than attacking

the person is crucial in maintaining a productive conflict resolution process. By depersonalizing the conflict, individuals can address the problem at hand more effectively.



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# Conflict & Reflection



**How can active listening contribute to effective conflict resolution?**

**What are some key benefits of using collaboration as a conflict resolution technique?**

**Conflicts can serve as the right opportunity for reflection, growth and learning. Reflecting on the underlying causes and the resolution process can help individuals and groups avoid similar conflicts in the future.**



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## 1.3 Conflict management styles

Conflict management styles refer to the diverse approaches individuals adopt when handling conflicts and disagreements. These styles can significantly impact the resolution process and the overall outcome of the conflict.



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# 5 Conflict Management Styles (Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument)

## Style

1

### Competing (or forcing):

**Approach:** In this style, individuals pursue their own concerns at the expense of others. It is assertive and uncooperative, often used when quick, decisive action is needed or when the individual feels strongly about the outcome.

**Example:** Leaders might use this style in emergency situations where there's little time for discussion.

2

### Collaborating:

**Approach:** This is both assertive and cooperative, where the parties work together to find a mutually beneficial solution. It's useful when addressing complex issues requiring input from multiple parties.

**Example:** Collaborating is often seen in team settings where innovation and creative solutions are necessary.



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# 5 Conflict Management Styles (Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument)

3

**Compromising:**

**Approach:** This style seeks a middle ground where both parties give up something to reach a solution. It's moderately assertive and cooperative, often used when the parties have equal power and are looking for a quick solution.

**Example:** This is common in negotiations or when time constraints prevent deeper discussions

4

**Avoiding:**

**Approach:** In this style, individuals neither assert their own needs nor cooperate with others. They avoid conflict by ignoring it or sidestepping it, often used when the issue is trivial or when it's better to delay action until emotions cool down.

**Example:** A manager might avoid addressing a minor conflict between team members, hoping it resolves itself.

5

**Accommodating:**

**Approach:** This is unassertive but cooperative, where one party gives in to the other's needs. It's used when maintaining the relationship is more important than the issue at hand.

**Example:** An employee might accommodate their colleague's request to avoid tension, even if it means personal inconvenience.



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## Activity



Max and Simon were working in the same team. One day, they were asked to collaborate on a project assigned to them from their superior. Max likes structure in his work and he sets strict deadlines to himself to be able to perform effectively. On the other hand, Simon works in a more flexible way. When Max tried to set deadlines to Simon and execute the project in a particular way, a conflict between the two occurred.

**Q1: What are the steps need to be followed to resolve the conflict between Max and Simon?**

**Q2: What is the cause of their conflict?**

**Q3: Which strategy/ strategies can resolve the conflict effectively and achieve the desire outcome?**



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## Further Readings

- Accenture CEO's Advice To Women: Stand Out. Youtube link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHq\\_EDi2PE8&ab\\_channel=ForbesWomen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHq_EDi2PE8&ab_channel=ForbesWomen).
- An article on the long term costs of not resolving workplace conflicts: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/leadership-lab/the-long-term-costs-of-not-resolving-workplace-conflicts/article25527147/costs-of-not-resolving-workplace-conflicts/article25527147/#targetText=Unresolved%20conflict%20can%20also%20have,and%20presentseeism%2C%20and%20employees%20quitting>.
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- Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument – Short Clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFlydyH2H8Y&t=10s>
- Research on Women Business Owners: Past Trends, a New Perspective and Future Directions. Full study available here: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/104225879201600401>
- Robin Hauser. TEDTalk: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2I4tus05hI&ab\\_channel=TED](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2I4tus05hI&ab_channel=TED).
- Robin Funsten TEDx Talk – ‘How Understanding Conflict Can Help Improve Our Lives’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdDQSHyyUic>

## **Assessment**

### **1. Conflict management refers to:**

- a. Avoiding all conflicts.**
- b. Resolving conflicts through competition.**
- c. Nurturing conflicts to promote creativity.**
- d. Handling conflicts constructively.**

### **2. Active listening in conflict management involves:**

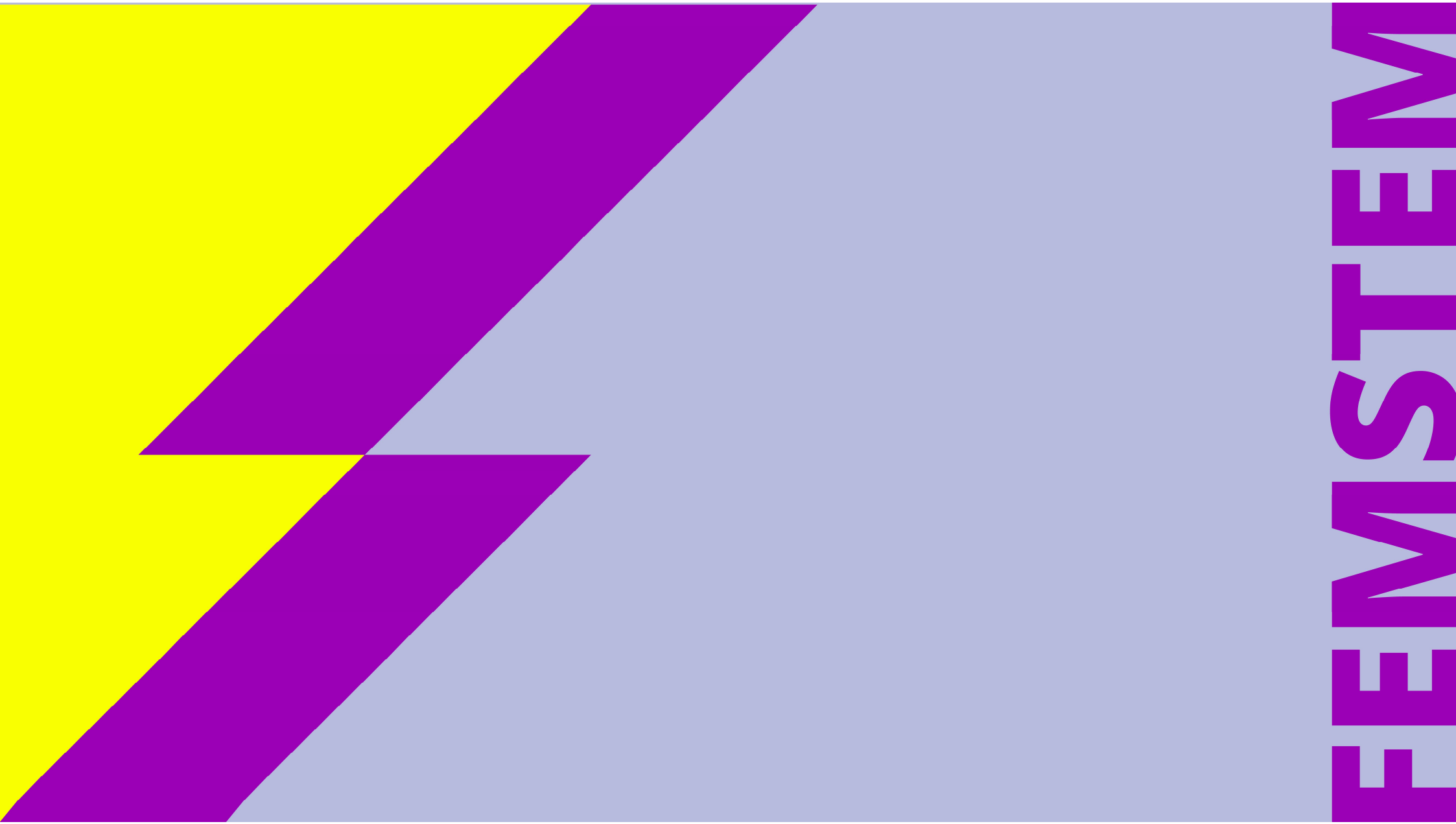
- a. Ignoring the other party's perspective.**
- b. Interrupting and imposing one's views forcefully.**
- c. Providing solutions immediately without listening.**
- d. Attentively hearing the other party's perspective without interruption.**

### **3. The win-win approach in conflict management aims to:**

- a. Ensure one party gains at the expense of the other.**
- b. Find solutions that benefit both parties.**
- c. Focus on personal gains only.**
- d. Aggressively pursue one's interests.**

## **Assessment**

- 4. Unresolved conflicts in the workplace can lead to:**
  - a. Improved teamwork and productivity.**
  - b. Stronger relationships among team members.**
  - c. Increased job satisfaction.**
  - d. Decreased productivity, low morale, and increased tension.**
- 5. Which conflict resolution technique involves making concessions on both sides?**
  - a. Avoidance.**
  - b. Collaboration.**
  - c. Compromise.**
  - d. Competition.**
- 6. Assertiveness in conflict management means:**
  - a. Yielding to the other party's demands.**
  - b. Being aggressive and dominating the conversation.**
  - c. Communicating needs and boundaries clearly and respectfully.**
  - d. Avoiding confrontation altogether.**



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