

MASTERCLASS:

The Secret to Conflict Resolution

April 2026



Introduction

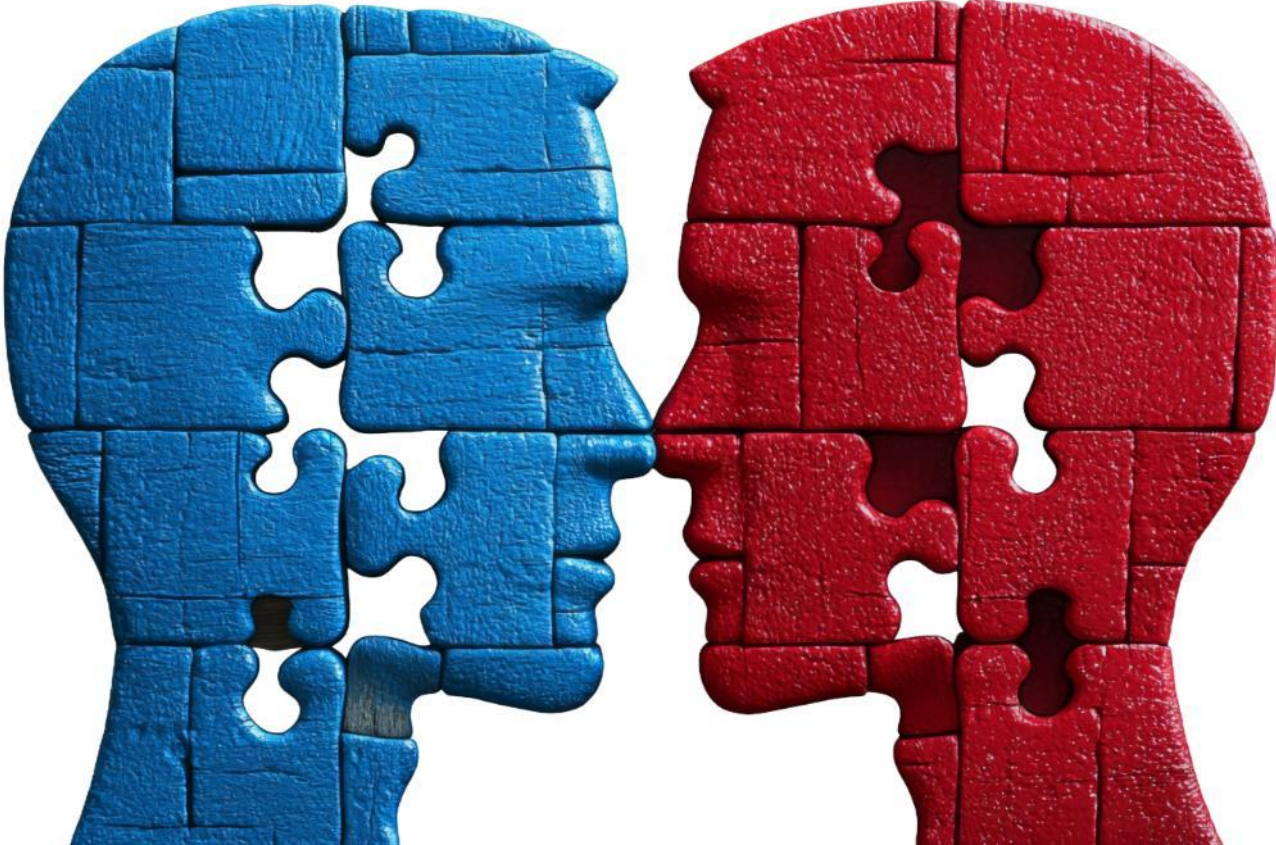


What We'll Cover

- Understanding conflict
- Preparing for conflict
- The difficult conversation
- Follow up
- Key takeaways



Step 1: Understanding Conflict



Understanding Conflict

The Myth of Harmony

*“Healthy teams disagree.
Unhealthy teams avoid.”*



Understanding Conflict

Other Myths About Conflict

“Conflict means something has gone wrong”

“Good teams don’t have conflict”

“If I raise it, it will get worse”

“Avoiding it will make it go away”

“It’s better to stay quiet”



Understanding Conflict

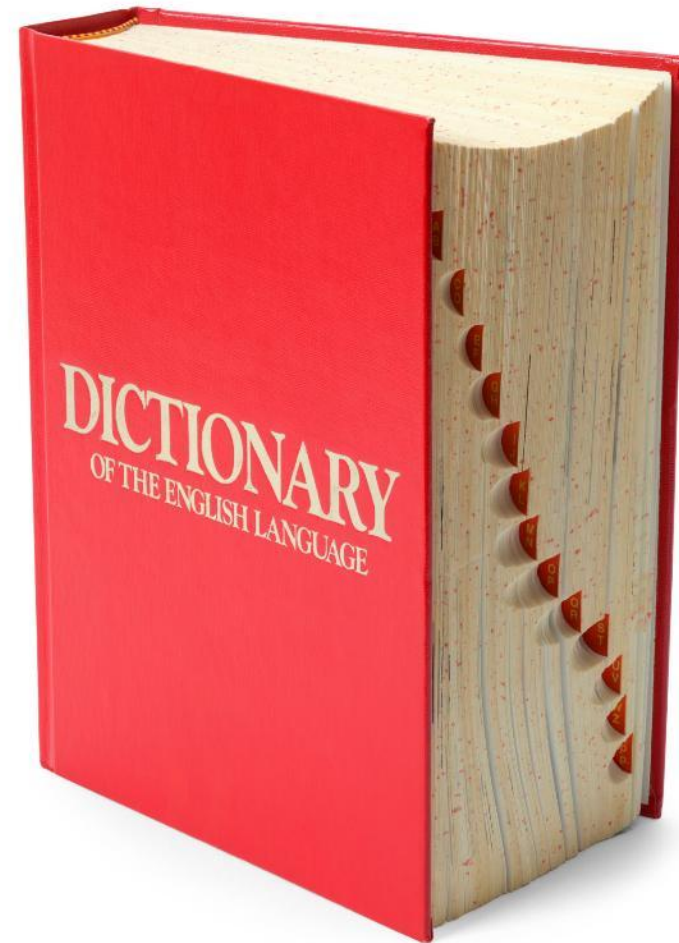
What is Conflict?



Understanding Conflict

Definition: Conflict

“An active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles”



Understanding Conflict

Bad Conflict

“Bad conflict drains energy, damages trust, and leaves issues unresolved.”



Understanding Conflict

Good Conflict

“Good conflict creates clarity, better decisions, and stronger working relationships.”



Understanding conflict



Why We Get It Wrong

“Most of us were never taught how to navigate conflict.”



Step 2: Preparation



Preparation

Why Does Preparation Matter?

“Preparation is the difference between **reaction** and **response**.”



Preparation

Managing Your Emotions

“Leaders must regulate themselves before they can regulate the room.”



Preparation

Conflict As Opportunity

“Conflict is a normal human response - it can feel intense, but it’s ultimately a catalyst for growth.”



Preparation

Managing Self

- Clarity
- Calm
- Control



Preparation

Know Your Style



Avoider?



Seeker?



Preparation

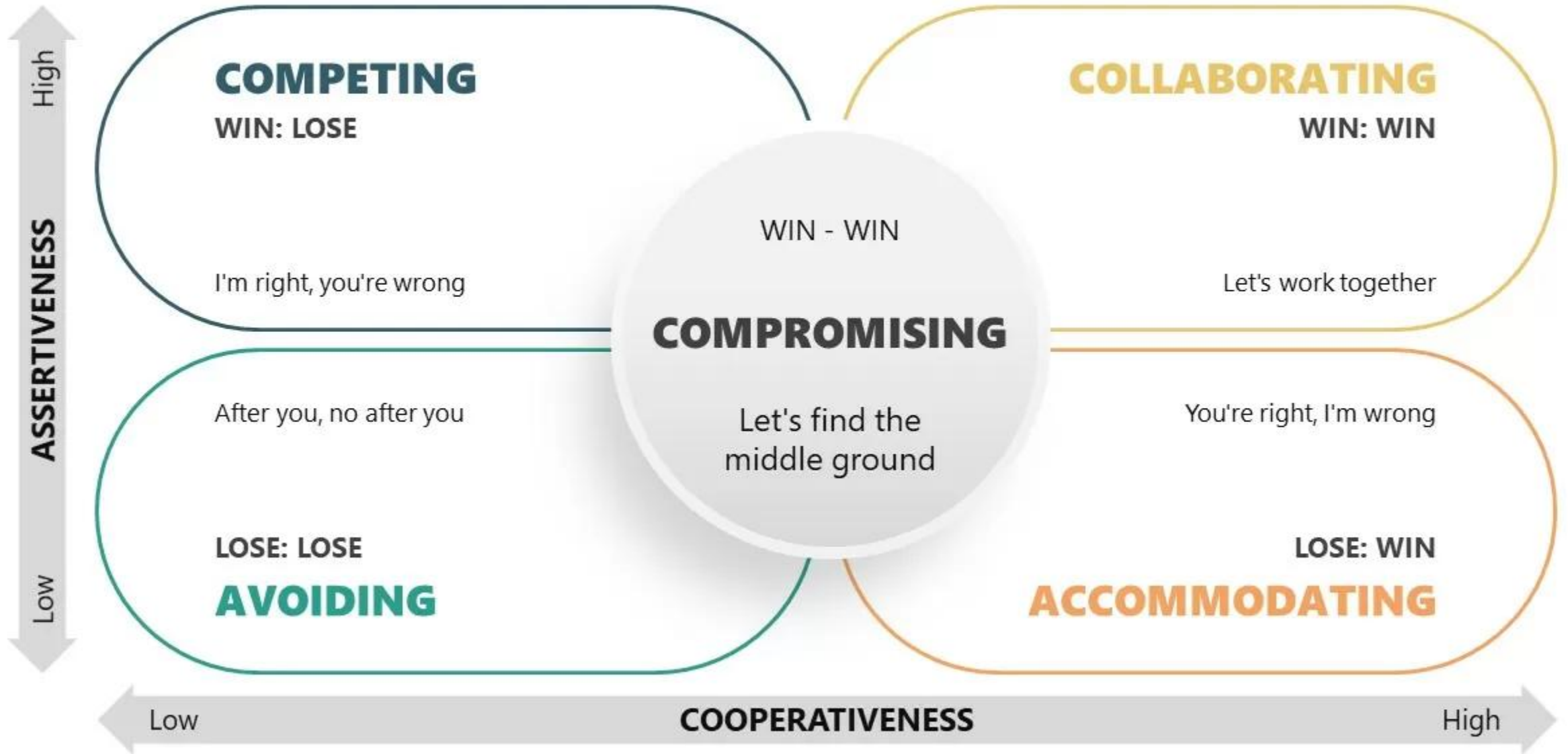
The Five Conflict Styles

- Avoiding
- Accommodating
- Competing
- Compromising
- Collaborating

Thomas & Kilmann (1974)



Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Management Model



Preparation

The Conversation Planner

- What's the real issue?
- What outcome do I want?
- What outcome might they want?
- What's my opening line?
- What emotions might show up?
- What will I do if the conversation gets stuck?



Preparation



Timing and Clarity

- Act promptly
- Choose the right moment
- Choose the right setting



Preparation

The 4 Types of Conflict

- Task
- Process
- Status
- Relationship



Source: Jehn, K. A. (1995); Bendersky, C., & Hays, N. A. (2012)

Step 3: The Conversation



The Conversation

The Respectful Conflict Model

- Get centred
- Open directly
- Seek perspective
- Explore the issue
- Agree on next steps
- Close with certainty



The Conversation

Replace Judgement With Curiosity

Judgement

“Your behaviour has been rude and unprofessional.”



The Conversation

Replace Judgement With Curiosity

Curiosity

“I’ve noticed you’ve been quieter and a bit abrupt in meetings. Can you help me understand what’s been happening?”



The Conversation

Helpful Language

“I might be misreading this...”

“Help me understand...”

“What impact did that have?”



The Conversation

Hurtful Language

“Calm down.”

“You always...”

“You need to understand...”

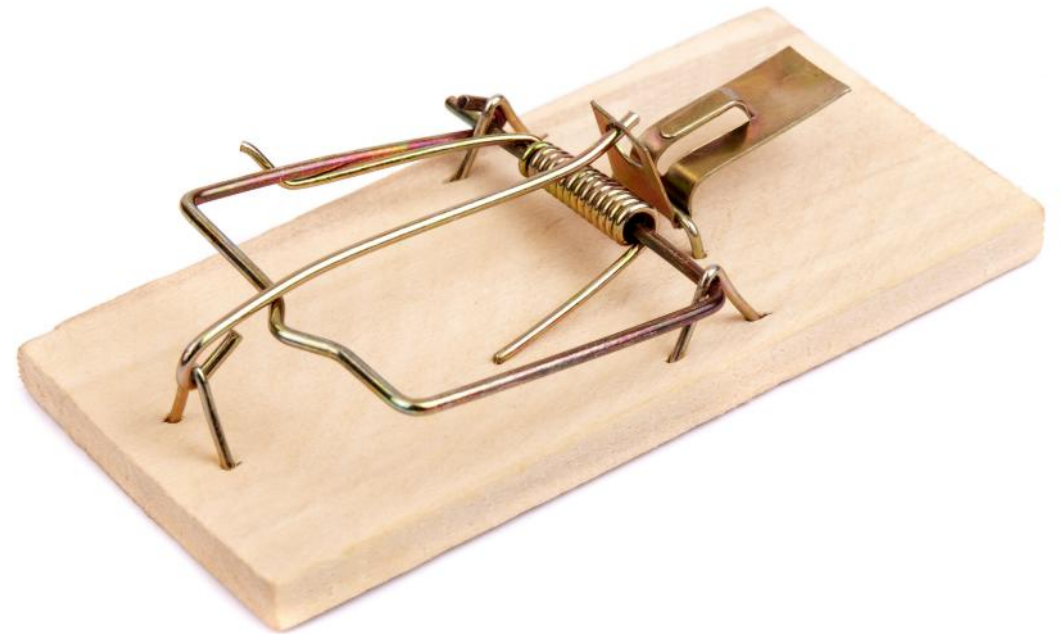
“That’s just how it is.”



The Conversation

Common Traps

- Over-explaining
- Not getting to the point
- Bringing up old history
- Avoiding silence
- Taking the bait



The Conversation

Active Listening

- Give full attention
- “Empty their bucket”
- Reflect back what you’ve heard
("What I’m hearing is...")
- Don’t interrupt



The Conversation

Body Language and Tone

- Open posture
- Calm tone
- Neutral expression



The Conversation



Common Emotional Reactions

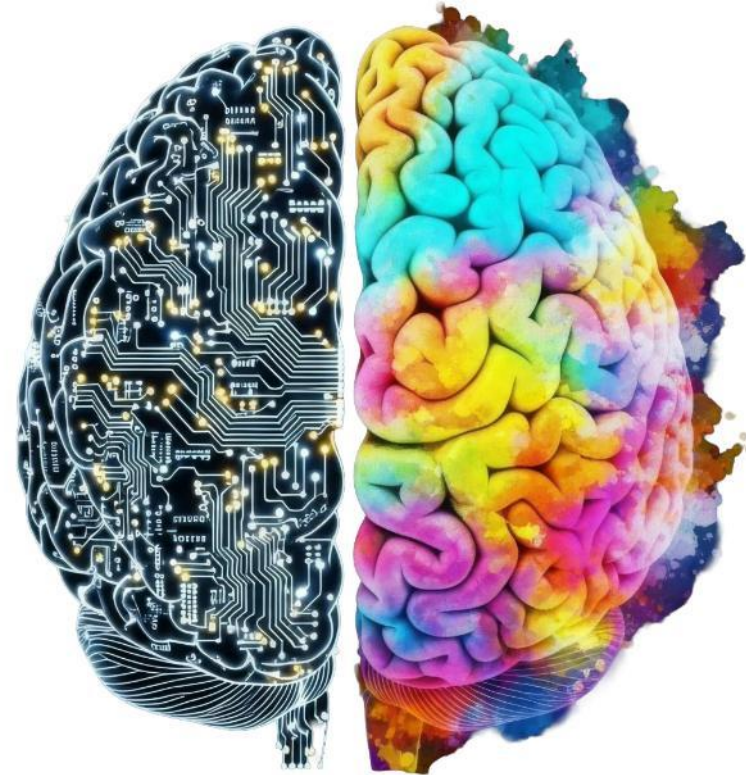
- Anger
- Frustration
- Anxiety or fear
- Feeling misunderstood



The Conversation

Respond v React

- **Responding** = intentional
- **Reacting** = impulsive



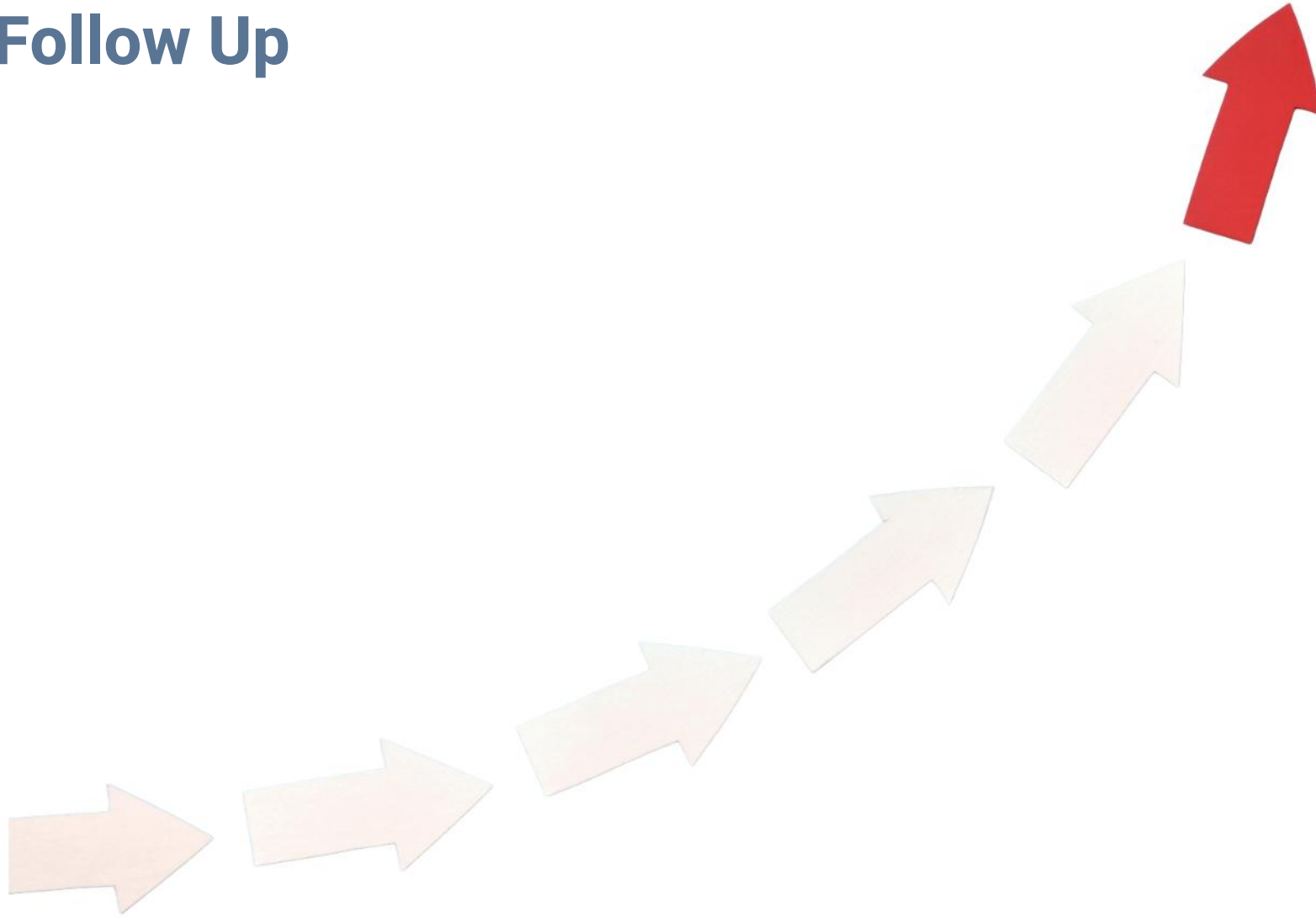
The Conversation

Psychological Safety in Conflict

“People speak up when they feel safe - and leaders create that safety through curiosity, consistency, follow-through, and calm.”



Step 4: Follow Up



Follow Up



Why Does it Matter?

- Builds trust
- Prevents issues resurfacing
- Demonstrates accountability



Follow Up

What Next?

“Conflict isn’t resolved when the conversation ends - it’s resolved when behaviour changes.”



Follow Up

What Good Follow Up Looks Like

- Summarise agreed actions
- Set timelines
- Check progress
- Recognise improvements
- Address slippage early
- Document commitments



Key Takeaways

- Conflict is normal – avoidance is the issue
- Not all conflict is bad
- Conflict is an opportunity for growth
- Discomfort is not danger
- Preparation determines outcomes
- Respectful communication is key



Your Challenge



“What is one conflict I’ve been avoiding?”

“What conversation will I have in the next 7 days?”

“What behaviour will I model differently from tomorrow?”



Thank You



Heart HR

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Let's Connect!



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