

# APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## A. There are three basic strategies – or styles - of seeking resolution for conflict situations:

Win-Lose

Lose-Lose

Win-Win

## B. Win-Lose and Lose-Lose methods of conflict resolution have several things in common:

1. There is a clear we-they distinction between the parties rather than a we-versus-the-problem orientation
2. Energies are directed toward the other party in an atmosphere of total victory or total defeat
3. Each party sees the problem from his/her point of view rather than defining the problem in terms of mutual needs
4. Conflicts are personalized rather than depersonalized via an objective focus on facts and issues
5. The parties are conflict-oriented, emphasizing the immediate disagreement, rather than relationship-oriented, emphasizing the long-term effect of their differences and how they are resolved

## C. In contrast, win-win problem-solving strategies focus on overcoming obstacles in a manner that provides high quality solutions that are acceptable to the parties involved in or affected by the decisions. Win-Win methods of conflict resolution have several things in common:

1. The parties seek to find a solution that is not unacceptable to anyone –which falls in either the “don’t care” or support category. A person committed to win-win problem-solving conveys the attitude *“I want a solution that achieves your goals and my goals and is acceptable to both of us.”*
2. Each party accepts full responsibility to express his/her own genuine feelings, opinions, and needs during the process of negotiating a solution. Either party cannot be blamed for a final solution that does not satisfy or respond to unspoken needs. A person committed to win-win problem-solving conveys the attitude *“It is our shared responsibility to be open and honest about facts, opinions, feelings, and needs.”*
3. The focus of win-win problem-solving is on defeating a problem rather than defeating another person. The parties are mutually invested in the possibility of accomplishing a shared goal or objective. Each party is asks, “How can we resolve this problem?” vs. “Can we resolve this problem?” A person committed to win-win problem-solving conveys the attitude *“I would like to find a solution in which you get what you want and I get what I want – that is, neither your solution nor my solution but a solution that satisfies both of us.”*

**Prepared By:** **Lee Beckstead, PhD & Jim Struve, LCSW**  
(adapted from *Interpersonal Conflict Resolution* by Alan Filey)