Healthy vs. Unhealthy Conflict Index

HEALTHY	UNHEALTHY
ATTITUDE: Conflict is inevitable; it is a chance to grow.	**ATTITUDE:** Conflict is wrong or sinful.
IMPERSONAL: Disputants are clearly able to see the difference between the people and the problems—and do not mix the two.	**PERSONAL:** Disputants quickly mix people and problems together and assume that by changing or eliminating the people, the problem will be solved.
COMMUNICATION is open. People speak directly to one another and everyone has the same information.	**COMMUNICATION** is diminished, with people speaking only to those with whom they already agree. Third parties or letters are used to carry messages.
THE BALANCE SHEET is short. The principals address the issue at hand, not what happened months or years ago.	**THE BALANCE SHEET** is long. The list of grievances grows and examples are collected. People recall not only what they think was done to them but what was said or done to their friends.
INTERACTIVE: There is give and take, an exchange of ideas, and a spirit of cooperation and openness. There is careful listening and thought-out statements.	**REACTIVE:** Problems cannot be "touched" without exploding. I write a memo to you and you immediately fire back a nasty letter to me.
ACCEPTANCE: Disputants acknowledge the existence of a problem and the need to solve it.	**DENIAL:** Disputants tend to ignore the real problem and deny what is going on.
TIMELINESS: Resolution takes as much time as needed. The parties take the time to go through the journey together, to experience the pain, and to come out together on the other side.	**LACK OF TIME:** There is a strong need to solve the problem too quickly. People are very solution oriented and seek to avoid the pain of conflict by saying, "Let's get it over with."

Adapted from *Mediation: The Book: A Step-by-Step Guide for Dispute Resolvers* by Sam Leonard (Evanston, Ill.: Evanston Publishing, 1994). Used by permission.

From Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations by Gil Rendle + Alice Mann