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Do you tend to shy away from conflict? Well, I'm Arlene Johnson, and today I'd like to talk about one of the five styles of conflict called avoiding. So let's start by addressing avoiding and defining it. The avoiding conflict style is a conflict resolution style in which a party does not make any attempt to address or resolve the conflict.

So let's look at where that style falls on this grid. I have a grid here with two axes. This axis is for assertiveness. And this one is cooperative-ness. And you'll know that avoiding falls down here. It's low on cooperative-ness, and also low on assertiveness. So let's take a moment and look at those two terms a little more closely, assertiveness and cooperative-ness.

So assertiveness, that is behavior in which a person confidently makes a statement without need of proof, affirming his or her rights, without attacking another's. Now what's key here is that the person does speak about their own needs, but does not attack the other party. So let's look at cooperative-ness. Cooperative-ness, is behavior in which two parties work in concert to achieve their mutual and respective individual goals. So avoidance is down here low in both assertiveness and cooperative-ness.

So let's take a look at a couple of examples of this avoiding conflict style. You come home from work and you notice that your spouse is in this argument with your teenage kids over chores not getting done, about coming in late the other night, homework, and it's just getting to be a heated argument. And you think, wow, I'm just going to go in the office and close the door, and you avoid it, which is your tendency. You avoid arguments like this at home. Another situation, you've gone on a trip with some friends. You've saved up some money for this. You notice, however, that you're running low on money. You've eaten in a few more restaurants than expected. And you know you're going to need to bring this up because it's going to make a difference in the trip here on some of the things you do, but you keep avoiding it. You just don't talk about it. Third example, you're walking down the street in your neighborhood and you notice there's some kids at the end of the block, and they're punching each other, and it looks like they're getting into a brawl, and you're walking right towards it. You decide to cross the street, and avoid that.

So those are three examples of avoiding conflict in different contexts. Now, this particular style of conflict, conflict style, can have either negative or positive results, as can all conflict styles. Let's take a look at that. First of all, positive and negative outcomes.

So positive and negative outcomes are resolutions to a conflict that a party perceives as meeting his or her needs, and/or reducing likelihoods of further conflict, that would be positive, or not meeting his or her needs and/or increasing likelihood of further conflict, which would be negative. So let's see how that plays out in the examples I gave you here. You come home, your spouse is arguing with the kids, you avoid it. Positive outcome? Well, maybe you and your kids get along OK. You avoid the argument. Negative? Things don't get settled around the house. The kids know you and your spouse aren't on the same page, and your spouse is furious with you. That could be the negative outcome.

You're walking down the street you see the kids in a brawl at the end of the block, and you avoid it. Positive outcome? You're safe. You didn't risk your safety. Negative outcome? Well, if you completely avoid this, maybe you don't call the police or call the parents of the kids if you know them, you may risk this kind of behavior escalating in your neighborhood. Third example, that trip you're on where you're running low on money and you avoid talking about it. Well, you might enjoy a few more meals out with your friends on this trip. Negative outcome? You come home and you're in deeper debt because you didn't address it upfront.

So those are some examples of positive and negative outcomes around the avoiding conflict style. Now, it's important to realize that even if avoiding is your natural tendency in conflict, you are capable of using all the different styles. And there are other styles and ways of responding to conflict. Everybody is capable of all styles, but we all have our tendencies towards maybe one that we feel most comfortable with. So thank you for being part of this tutorial, and I look forward to seeing you next time.