

Case Two: Analytic and Expressive Social Styles

Lydia, a junior faculty member, recently joined a departmental committee tasked with revising the graduate core curriculum. For an upcoming meeting, Lydia had been asked to review the national accreditation board's assessment of the graduate program from several years earlier and to make recommendations to the committee regarding next steps. Although Lydia did not enjoy making presentations, she learned much from studying the accreditation documents closely. In preparation for her report to the committee, she contacted similar departments at peer institutions and asked them for detailed information about their graduate program's accreditation process. She also made packets for all committee members with all information relevant to the several options she was giving to her colleagues to choose from.

When she arrived at the committee meeting, its chair, Rick, greeted her warmly. He presented her with a bottle of wine, saying he hoped it would make up for sticking her with the lousiest job on the committee, reviewing those "dry-as-dust" documents. Before getting to business, he asked people in the group about their weekends and made jokes about a current political situation. Nervous about her presentation, Lydia said little. When it came time for her presentation, she passed out her hand-outs. Rick weighed his packet and with a smile said, "Oh, I see...you want to share the pain!" For the next twenty minutes, Lydia reviewed the details from the national review board assessment. Before she could outline the number of options she thought the committee could adopt, Rick asked in an exasperated tone: "Can you wrap this up? What do you think we need to do here?" When Lydia began to review the number of options she had devised for the committee's consideration, Rick interrupted her. "We all know what the real problems are here." He launched into his personal feelings on the current curriculum and suggested several dramatic changes. Lydia said nothing and left the meeting early.

How could Lydia flex to reduce tension and conflict in this relationship?

How could Rick flex to reduce tension and conflict in this relationship?