

**What You're Seeing:** Conflict that's loud, forceful, and hard to ignore. It shows up as confrontation, interruptions, or emotional outbursts — designed to dominate the room and control the outcome. Their style can feel personal, but it's usually about control, not malice.

**Your Leadership Goal:** Stay calm and redirect. Don't match their energy — use process and composure to steady the group and keep dialogue open.

## **The Bulldozer**

**Goal:** Win through force

**Method:** Volume, repetition, dominance

**Signature Move:** Interrupts, restates, drowns out

**Impact:** Quieter voices retreat; "loud wins" becomes culture

**Why It Matters:** Over time, compliance replaces collaboration

### ✓ **What Works**

- Acknowledge briefly: "I hear your point — let's get other perspectives."
- Redirect: "Let's pause — how do others feel about this?"
- Use group norms or time limits to balance the floor.

### ✗ **Avoid**

- Matching energy or volume
- Shutting down or retreating.

### 💡 **Leadership Cue**

- Don't push back. Recenter the process.

## **The Volcano**

**Goal:** Release pressure

**Method:** Calm → sudden eruption

**Signature Move:** Emotional blast that silences the room

**Impact:** People avoid honesty; candor feels unsafe

**Why It Matters:** Emotional outbursts destroy psychological safety

### ✓ **What Works**

- Lower your tone; model calm.
- Name the moment: "This feels intense — let's pause."
- Regroup later, privately.

### ✗ **Avoid**

- Absorbing the blast.
- Retaliating or responding in real time.

### 💡 **Leadership Cue**

- Be the calm after the eruption.

## **The Joker**

**Goal:** Undermine without accountability

**Method:** Sarcasm, humor, or mockery

**Signature Move:** "Just kidding" comments that sting

**Impact:** Normalizes cynicism, weakens trust

**Why It Matters:** When jokes replace candor, integrity erodes quietly

### ✓ **What Works**

- Turn humor into accountability: "Can you say more about that?"
- Set the norm: "Sarcasm can cloud the issue. Let's talk solutions."
- Model respect and seriousness.

### ✗ **Avoid**

- Laughing along or ignoring it repeatedly.

### 💡 **Leadership Cue**

- You can't out-joke a Joker. Respect beats snark.



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This guide is part of The Academic Leader's Playbook: *Conflict Series* — a three-part toolkit on Direct, Indirect, and Controlling conflict styles found in higher ed. Designed to help leaders recognize, navigate, and reduce tension before it derails their work.