

Conflict Resolution

Objectives:

1. Distinguish among three stages of conflict.
2. Demonstrate methods to effectively resolve conflict situations.

Approximate length of lesson: 20-25 minutes

Supplies:

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Copies of "Three Stages of Conflict" information sheet and "Testing Your Conflict Resolution Knowledge" (see attached)

Interest Approach:

Ask the youth to think about a time they were in conflict with someone—a parent, sibling, friend, or teacher. Have the youth talk about emotions they felt, how they dealt with the conflict, and the outcome. Write down their different answers on the flip chart and discuss how the youth feel about the conflict.

Conflict Resolution Lesson:

Explain to youth that conflict is inevitable. No matter where you are or what you are doing, there is bound to be conflict, whether someone brings it to your attention or not. Conflict is not necessarily bad. It is a chance to create an understanding between individuals or groups with differing opinions.

Conflict occurs when issues appear to be incompatible. There are two types of conflict:

- **internal conflict** which is a disturbance that rages within a single individual and
- **interpersonal conflict** which is a disturbance that exists between 2 or more individuals or groups.

Once you realize there is a conflict, you should work to resolve the issue. Always remember that conflict is normal. It may not be easy to deal with, but in the end, dealing with it is much better than ignoring it. Do not start off angry; be sure you cool off before you confront others. All parties should be made aware of the situation and be equally involved in resolving the conflict. Anger is not productive if that is all that is expressed, but if positive feelings are built upon, then something positive came from the anger and conflict. While you are working to resolve the issue be sure to:

- Keep a check on your temper
- Be open minded
- Listen to others
- Cool off if needed
- Keep your voice calm
- Work towards a fair solution
- Refrain from putting down other(s) involved
- Include all those involved in the discussion

Activity:

Hand out the attached worksheet on the “Three Stages of Conflict.” Explain the three stages of conflict prior to beginning the activity. Have the youth get into groups of 4-7 and ask them to come up with at least two examples of each stage of conflict. Have each group outline a conflict and come up with an example of how to work together to resolve the conflict.

Test Your Knowledge:

Provide the students with a copy of “Test Your Conflict Resolution Knowledge” questions. Give time for them to answer the questions and review their answers.

Answer Key: 1. T, 2. T, 3. B, 4. Keep a check on your temper, be open minded, listen to others, cool off if needed, keep your voice calm, work towards a fair solution, refrain from putting down other(s) involved, include all those involved in the discussion

If you still have time...

Extras:

1. Have the youth use the scenario they outlined earlier and act it out. Have them work together to solve the problem and come to a positive conclusion. Ideas: How old should you be when you get a cell phone? Should you get an afterschool job? Who pays for your car? Should you get a pet?

Discussion Questions:

- What stage of conflict was your issue?
- How did you feel about being at odds with someone over this issue?
- Did you feel like your feelings and thoughts were heard?
- Did you listen to other’s thoughts and feelings and really think about them?
- How do you feel about the conclusion your group came to?

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2. Divide the group into small groups of 3-5. Distribute one of the scenarios below to each group. Ask each group to prepare a short, unscripted role-play to present to the whole group that shows a possible resolution to the conflict.

Discussion Questions:

- What did the participants do well as they attempted to resolve the conflict?
- What methods did the participants use to resolve the conflict?
- Which of these methods were effective? Which were not?
- What additional steps could have been taken?
- What should happen next in this scenario?

Scenarios:

1. It seems like everyone at school is getting a cell phone. Some have their parents pay for it, some pay for it themselves. Your parents have said “No” either way. You are too young to get a cell phone. How would you go about resolving this conflict with your parents?
2. You are in math class with your best friend. She did not do her homework last night because she did not understand it. Therefore she wants to copy your homework during lunch. If you say no, you are afraid that she will get mad and flunk the homework assignment. If you say yes, you will be cheating and giving in to peer pressure. How do you deal with your friend?
3. Your teacher gave everyone in the class a partner for the final project of the year. Your partner is usually an A student. It is a big project that is worth a lot of your grade. Your partner did not finish his parts of the project, and what he did do, he did poorly. You and he receive a C on the project, even though you filled out peer evaluations. How do you talk with your teacher about your grade?

Resources:

Betty Krejci, i-LEaD “Conflict Management.” Purdue University Cooperative Extension

Steve McKinley, “Conflict Management Techniques.” April 5, 2007.

Steve McKinley, “Conflict Management Scenarios.”

Three Stages of Conflict

Stage One: Everyday Difficulties (typically not a big deal; may choose to give in, go along with, or ignore)	
Characteristics	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low intensity • Day-to-day irritations • Discomfort and anger are quickly passed off • “No big deal” attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance • Obliging • Jointly examine both sides • Evaluate the proportion of the reaction to the situation
Stage Two: Significant Difficulties (people take sides; look to win; save face; preserve own self-interests)	
Characteristics	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Win-lose attitude • More personal investment • Self interest & saving face is important • Victories/mistakes are remembered • Alliances & cliques are formed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a safe environment-neutral • Hard on facts and soft on people • Do initial work as a team • Look for middle ground • Allow enough time • Seat people next to each other
Stage Three: Overt Battles (not only want to win, but also want to hurt; no middle ground)	
Characteristics	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from wanting to win to wanting to hurt • Being right and punishing the wrong is a consuming motivation • Positions are polarized • Logic and reason are ineffective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation-discussion and compromise • Mediation-third party serves as a go-between in order to reconcile • Arbitration-determination of a case in controversy by a person selected by the parties

Test Your Conflict Resolution Knowledge

1. A mediator is a third party person who works with both sides of a conflict to come to an agreement.
TRUE or FALSE
2. Conflict can be constructive.
TRUE or FALSE
3. Which of the following is not a characteristic of Stage Two: Significant Difficulties?
 - A. Alliances and cliques are formed.
 - B. Shift from wanting to win to wanting to hurt.
 - C. More personal investment.
 - D. Victories and mistakes are remembered.
4. List at least three things you need to be sure you do when dealing with conflict.