



Combating Conflict with Character

MANAGING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Introduction

This guide provides information to help you get the most out of *Managing Conflict Resolution*. The contents of this guide will help you get your students to think about the topic before viewing the video, while also providing follow-up discussion questions and activities to reinforce and expand upon the program's key learning points.

A dynamic struggle between contrasting forces is necessary — it creates ideas and drives change. But as everyone knows, life is also filled with hurtful and even tragic forms of conflict. Students learn about both types of opposition in this video, which illustrates ways to use conflict constructively while avoiding violence, alienation, and resentment. Beginning with the notion that we deal with conflict largely through patterns learned as children, the program explores four behaviors that push conflict into the destructive zone: miscommunication, demonizing, refusal to negotiate, and “kitchen sinking” or pulling past events and unrelated frustrations into a present disagreement. The pitfalls of a “conflict loop” are also discussed. Viewers gain an understanding of the potential rewards of recognizing an opponent's needs as well as one's own. Mediation, including peer mediation and the “third side” method of negotiation, are examined.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the program, students will be able to:

- Explain the difference between constructive and destructive conflict resolution.
- Describe some ways in which conflict can damage and/or strengthen relationships.
- Explain how destructive reactions to conflict can lead to violence and aggression and have far-reaching impacts on schools and communities.
- Identify the five key steps of constructive conflict resolution.

Program Overview

In this program, teens reenact scenes where conflicts arise, illustrating both positive and negative ways these difficult situations can be handled. Experts point out the downsides of reacting without stopping to think about where the other party is coming from, overreacting to a situation, and responding to conflict in other destructive or aggressive ways. Practical strategies for communicating effectively and negotiating conflicts constructively are discussed.

Main Topics

Topic 1: Close to Home: Learning About Conflict Behavior

This section defines conflict as a force that moves people, ideas, and culture to new ways of acting, thinking, and being. Conflict is not always bad — in fact, it can be healthy. How we deal with conflict is what matters. Patterns learned at home often influence how we communicate when faced with conflict in our own lives. Constructive vs. destructive conflict resolution are explained.

Topic 2: Together Forever: Managing Conflict Between Friends

This section illustrates how conflicts start between people who have close relationships. Expressing feelings appropriately and working through conflicts constructively can change the outcome and strengthen our relationships. Understanding differences in communication styles, and active listening, can help.

Topic 3: The Peaceable School: Putting Conflict Resolution Skills to Work

Avoiding conflict and preventing violence through a “peaceful school” initiative is the focus of this section. Educating parents, students, and instructors on the five keys of constructive conflict resolution can cut down on hurt feelings, miscommunication, threats, intimidation, aggression, and violence.

Topic 4: Sharks and Peacemakers

This section talks about how destructive conflicts wear down relationship bonds and even put communities at risk. Violence can quickly form a vicious cycle resulting in far-reaching, long-lasting negative effects on attitudes and behaviors. Taking responsibility and apologizing can prevent conflicts from escalating.

Fast Facts

- According to NAME (the National Association for Mediation in Education), the value of peer mediation is “to teach students how to deal with anger constructively, how to communicate feelings and concerns without using violence and abusive language, and how to think critically about alternative solutions in which all parties win.”
- It’s illegal to exclude or treat people unfairly based on race, religion, gender, a disability, or sexual preference. This holds true for jobs, housing, bank loans, educational opportunities, social events, access to public facilities, places and transportation, and even clubs and sports teams.
- “Constructive conflict” implies normal and natural disagreement, and is an opportunity to look at differences, improve a situation or relationship, and find solutions.
- “Destructive conflict” is when disagreement turns to aggression, angry confrontation, hurtful behavior, abuse, abandonment, or violence.
- A “conflict loop” occurs when those who lack confidence in their ability to cope with conflict are less open to new experiences. This gets in the way of clear communication. Miscommunication leads to misunderstanding and conflict, which decreases confidence, thus starting the cycle over again.
- If the people involved in a conflict take a break and talk to each other in a less pressured situation, they will often be able to present their point of view without blaming or accusing.
- Active listening is the foundation of good communication.
- In one survey of junior and senior high school students conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in 1999:
 - 33% said that when they were really angry there was no way they could control themselves;
 - 41% said that if they were challenged, they would fight;
 - 21% said that avoiding fights was a sign of weakness;
 - more than one in three said that they had been in a physical fight in the past year.

Vocabulary Terms

apathy: A state where people see something they disagree with or they think is wrong, but they don’t do anything about it because they have the attitude that “it really doesn’t matter anyway.”

conflict loop: When someone who has trouble coping with conflict is not open to new experiences, thus impeding clear communication, leading to misunderstanding and conflict, which decreases confidence, thus starting the cycle over again.

defamation: Saying or writing false, negative things about a person or people.

demonize: To ascribe evil motives and/or characteristics to another person or group of people.

discrimination: Making judgments or taking action based on perceived traits and differences of race, social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and/or physique or other personal characteristics.

kitchen sinking: Pulling past events and unrelated frustrations into a present disagreement.

manipulate: To control or persuade another person through enticing but harmful means.

mediation: Working towards an agreement or reconciliation.

mentor: A trusted counselor or coach.

negotiation: Mutual discussion and arrangement of terms or an agreement.

self-esteem: A confidence and satisfaction in oneself.

tolerance: A fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own.

Pre-Program Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of destructive conflict and constructive conflict?
2. In what ways are destructive conflict and constructive conflict similar and different?
3. In what ways have you seen your peers handle conflict?
4. What are some of the reasons why personal conflicts are handled destructively?

Post Program Discussion Questions

1. In what ways have you seen adults handle conflict in a constructive manner?
2. What are some long-term effects of destructive conflict in your school, community, or the world?
3. As a bystander, what can you do to help a friend effectively handle conflict?
4. When conflict forms into a cycle of aggression or violence, what can be done to resolve it?
5. What can you do to prepare yourself to deal with conflict when it arises?

Group Activities

- **Long-Lasting Conflict:** Examples of destructive conflict can easily be found throughout history. Choose a conflict that is currently ongoing somewhere in the world. Work together as a group to identify the main issues, parties involved, and pivotal events associated with the conflict. Then, divide the topics among the group members and use the internet and other resources to explore the issues. Prepare a 10-minute presentation to explain the root causes of the conflict, how it has evolved, that constructive and/or destructive ways in which the conflict has been handled, and the perspectives of the different parties involved.
- **Constructive Communication:** Invite your school principal or guidance counselor to visit your class to participate in an open discussion about conflict resolution in your school. Prepare and share questions with the counselor prior to the discussion, if possible. Ask the counselor to consider preparing questions for students as well.

Individual Student Projects

- **Conflict Mentor:** Interview an adult whom you feel is skilled in handling conflict in a constructive manner. What kinds of conflict has this person experienced? What experiences have influenced this person's approach to conflict resolution? What can you learn from their attitudes and approach? Write a one-page summary of your interview and how you can apply what you learned from this person.
- **Constructive Language:** Identify five words or phrases to describe constructive conflict resolution. Create a poster to illustrate what these words mean to you and how they can contribute to better conflict outcomes and stronger relationships.

Internet Activities

- **Local Conflict:** Political parties often use conflicting points of view or differing ideas about how to handle an issue to gain support during a campaign. Choose a local or state politician and use the internet to learn about this person's involvement in a constructive or destructive conflict. Find out the facts associated with the conflict. How are the facts used in a destructive or constructive manner? How do differing perspectives and approaches influence how a conflict is resolved? How do political conflicts incite ideological or societal change? Write a 1-2 page report describing this politician's involvement with and approach to conflict.

Assessment Questions

Q1: _____ is behavior in which people oppose one another in their thoughts, feelings and/or actions.

- a) Character
- b) Mediation
- c) Negotiation
- d) Conflict

Q2: Which of the following is an example of destructive conflict?

- a) You and a friend are in charge of organizing a fundraiser for your sports team. His ideas are completely different and at odds with yours. You sit down to discuss the pros and cons of each and ask for input from other team members.
- b) You're frustrated with a teacher who keeps giving you low grades on written assignments despite the extra time you put into them lately. You sneak into her classroom during a break period and trash her desk and bookshelves.
- c) Three political candidates have differing opinions on a proposed ordinance in your town. They hold a debate to discuss their points of view and their unique perspectives on how to improve the situation.
- d) Your feelings are hurt when a friend doesn't ask your opinion about a relationship problem she is having. You ask her to meet you for breakfast on Saturday to talk to her about how you feel.

Q3: Respecting differences and appreciating individuals for their unique character can be described as _____.

- a) bias
- b) prejudice
- c) tolerance
- d) defamation

Q4: When you're involved in a conflict, it can be helpful to _____, so that you can present your point of view without blaming or accusing.

- a) take a break and talk to each other in a less pressured situation
- b) punch the other person until they give in
- c) talk louder than the other person
- d) get a group of friends on your side

- Q5:** Which type of behavior is NOT an effective way to manage conflict constructively?
- a) Work together
 - b) Get the facts and feelings
 - c) Avoid discussion
 - d) Identify the root of the conflict
- Q6:** True or False: Punching someone for cheating off of you without you knowing is an example of effective, constructive conflict management.
- a) True
 - b) False
- Q7:** Which of the following is an example of constructive conflict?
- a) Your teacher has assigned you to work on a project with a group of disinterested, uncooperative students — again. You meet with them on the first day, explain your concerns, and come to an agreement about who will be responsible for the various tasks.
 - b) You're hurt and disappointed about not being invited to a party, so you and a group of your friends show up anyway and insult and embarrass the host.
 - c) Your parents don't buy you the new cell phone you've been wanting, so you avoid speaking to them and stay in your bedroom.
 - d) Your friend told another friend about something you had asked her to keep to herself. You log into her social media web page and post an unflattering picture of her.
- Q8:** In a survey of junior and senior high school students, _____ said that if they were challenged, they would fight, and _____ said that avoiding fights was a sign of weakness.
- a) over 40%; over 20%
 - b) over 30%; over 40%
 - c) over 40%; over 30%
 - d) over 60%; over 50%
- Q9:** Chronic anger can _____.
- a) influence others to have similar feelings
 - b) escalate into violence
 - c) be rooted in deeper issues, such as substance abuse
 - d) all of the above
- Q10:** True or False: Holding a grudge can cause depression, anxiety, and deterioration of relationships.
- a) True
 - b) False

Assessment Questions Answer Key

Q1: _____ is behavior in which people oppose one another in their thoughts, feelings and/or actions.

- a) Character
- b) Mediation
- c) Negotiation
- d) Conflict

A1: d)

Feedback: Although conflict involves opposition, it can be either constructive or destructive.

Q2: Which of the following is an example of destructive conflict?

- a) You and a friend are in charge of organizing a fundraiser for your sports team. His ideas are completely different and at odds with yours. You sit down to discuss the pros and cons of each and ask for input from other team members.
- b) You're frustrated with a teacher who keeps giving you low grades on written assignments despite the extra time you put into them lately. You sneak into her classroom during a break period and trash her desk and bookshelves.
- c) Three political candidates have differing opinions on a proposed ordinance in your town. They hold a debate to discuss their points of view and their unique perspectives on how to improve the situation.
- d) Your feelings are hurt when a friend doesn't ask your opinion about a relationship problem she is having. You ask her to meet you for breakfast on Saturday to talk to her about how you feel.

A2: b)

Feedback: Destructive conflict is when disagreement turns to aggression, angry confrontation, hurtful behavior, abuse, abandonment, or violence.

Q3: Respecting differences and appreciating individuals for their unique character can be described as _____.

- a) bias
- b) prejudice
- c) tolerance
- d) defamation

A3: c)

Feedback: Tolerance is a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own.

Q4: When you're involved in a conflict, it can be helpful to _____, so that you can present your point of view without blaming or accusing.

- a) take a break and talk to each other in a less pressured situation
- b) punch the other person until they give in
- c) talk louder than the other person
- d) get a group of friends on your side

A4: a)

Feedback: It can be helpful to step away from a situation and talk to the other person when you have had some time to cool down and are less likely to overreact.

Q5: Which type of behavior is NOT an effective way to manage conflict constructively?

- a) Work together
- b) Get the facts and feelings
- c) Avoid discussion
- d) Identify the root of the conflict

A5: c)

Feedback: When you don't address a conflict, it has the potential to turn into a grudge, which can have long-lasting negative effects on a relationship.

Q6: True or False: Punching someone for cheating off of you without you knowing is an example of effective, constructive conflict management.

- a) True
- b) False

A6: b)

Feedback: Violence and aggression are not constructive ways to handle a conflict.

Q7: Which of the following is an example of constructive conflict?

- a) Your teacher has assigned you to work on a project with a group of disinterested, uncooperative students — again. You meet with them on the first day, explain your concerns, and come to an agreement about who will be responsible for the various tasks.
- b) You're hurt and disappointed about not being invited to a party, so you and a group of your friends show up anyway and insult and embarrass the host.
- c) Your parents don't buy you the new cell phone you've been wanting, so you avoid speaking to them and stay in your bedroom.
- d) Your friend told another friend about something you had asked her to keep to herself. You log into her social media web page and post an unflattering picture of her.

A7: a)

Feedback: "Constructive conflict" implies normal and natural disagreement, and is an opportunity to look at differences, improve a situation or relationship, and find solutions.

Q8: In a survey of junior and senior high school students, _____ said that if they were challenged, they would fight, and _____ said that avoiding fights was a sign of weakness.

- a) over 40%; over 20%
- b) over 30%; over 40%
- c) over 40%; over 30%
- d) over 60%; over 50%

A8: a)

Feedback: In a survey of junior and senior high school students conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in 1999, 41% said that if they were challenged, they would fight, and 21% said that avoiding fights was a sign of weakness.

Q9: Chronic anger can _____.

- a) influence others to have similar feelings
- b) escalate into violence
- c) be rooted in deeper issues, such as substance abuse
- d) all of the above

A9: d)

Feedback: While conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, they do not have to lead to violence. Around the country, many schools and community groups offer conflict resolution programs for teens.

Q10: True or False: Holding a grudge can cause depression, anxiety, and deterioration of relationships.

- a) True
- b) False

A10: a)

Feedback: Holding a grudge is a destructive way to handle a conflict since it does not overcome the problem, but allows it to fester and grow.

Additional Resources

American Psychological Association

www.apa.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Search on "healthy relationships"

www.cdc.gov

Nemours Foundation TeensHealth.org

www.kidshealth.org

Teen Help.com
www.teenhelp.com

The Cool Spot
www.thecoolspot.gov/pressures.asp

National Crime Prevention Council
Search on "conflict resolution"
www.ncpc.org

Order from www.CambridgeEducational.com • 1-800-257-5126

Every Teen Has Challenges

Even healthy, well-adjusted teens have difficulties and obstacles to overcome. This program provides valuable insight into the challenges of growing, changing, and learning during the teenage years. Using a documentary approach, the program features 16 teenagers who speak candidly about their personal fears, anxieties, and frustrations. These likable young people also share the steps that they have taken to resolve their issues and offer words of advice for other teens. Issues presented include depression, suicide, family tensions, divorce, peer pressure, isolation, discrimination, drug use, eating disorders, and others. Not available for preview. (79 minutes) © 2004

Work it Out! Workshop

Turn disagreements into growth opportunities with this multimedia conflict management workshop. The *Work It Out!* video and teacher's guide, six laminated posters, and workbooks — ten student editions and one teacher edition — are highly effective tools for teaching students that conflicts can be resolved effectively and nonviolently. The video uses scenario analysis to model four key conflict resolution strategies: taking the person out of the problem; focusing on issues, not egos; being objective; and creating win-win solutions. A Cambridge Educational Product. Correlates to National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education and Project 2061. One multimedia set. © 2005