

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

“Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for mankind to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Mankind must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

January

Conflict Resolution Key Concepts

By now, the students have participated in activities that have helped them understand what it takes to be an effective team member, the need to understand that different people have different traits and talents, and the need to listen as well as share an opinion. Through the exercises, students will have undoubtedly felt frustrated as they came in contact with people with different ideas, beliefs, and ways of doing things.

The same happens in every day life. There is always somebody with conflicting opinions or ways of doing things. Some people like to get right in our face when they get frustrated and let it all hang out. Some people crawl into a shell and withdraw figuring its best just to let the other person always have their way. The focus of the activities in this lesson is to show students that there can be a middle ground – that life is not a win all take all proposition, but rather can be a win-win situation. We learn to give and take. We learn to compromise. We learn that the key to reaching middle ground lies in the way we handle conflicting moments.

Conflict Resolution Activity 1

Can of Squirms

Purpose (Objective): The purpose of this activity is to get the students to discuss ethical issues and how to handle peer pressure.

Materials Needed: You will need at least one situation in the container for every person in the group. The situations should deal with ethical situations students might find themselves in. Type these up and then cut into slips of paper with one issue per slip. Mix up the slips and put them in a hat, box, or other container.

Group Size: Works with any size group.

Total Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Instructions: Participants will take turns drawing a slip of paper from the container. Each slip will have a situation or scenario printed on the paper. The student will tell how they would handle the situation.

Awareness - Discuss with the audience the issue of peer pressure. Talk about how hard it can be at times to do the right thing and how they can handle these tough situations.

Assessment - Have participants consider why we must be able to make the right choice and resist falling to peer pressure.

Plan - Tell the participants that each will be drawing out a slip of paper that has a situation that they will need to respond to in front of the group.

Action - Have the group sit in a circle. Randomly select a student and have them pull out a slip of paper. After they pull the slip out, have them read it out loud for all to hear and then give their response. After the response, discuss the issues related to the scenario and the pros and cons of actions they might choose. After the group comes to a consensus of an appropriate choice, move to another student. Repeat until all have been able to participate.

Debrief: Discuss how peer pressure makes us sometimes do things we know are wrong for the wrong reason. Discuss how we can overcome peer pressure and learn to do what's right for us.

Variations: You can add a segment called "with it or cop out", by having all participants have two signs, one with "with it" printed on it and the other that has "cop out" printed on it. After the volunteer responds, the group votes on whether they thought they did an honest effort of doing the right thing, or cop out that they just did it to get by, or they made the wrong choice and have them explain why they thought it was a wrong choice. This sometimes helps add more discussion.

Helpful Hints: Make sure people aren't ridiculed or humiliated. Help them understand ways of making choices without subjecting to peer pressure.

Conflict Resolution Activity 2 **Shoulder Tap Exercise**

Purpose: To illustrate in an active way how we can turn a “win-lose” into a “win-win” situation. Use this exercise to make a point about conflict.

Materials Needed: None

Total Time Required: 15 minutes

Group Size: Two students per group

Instructions: All students are asked to stand and pair up. They are to place the toe of their left shoes face to face and grasp each other's left hands. Demonstrate this for the students so they can model your behavior. Tell them that their goal is to tap the other person's shoulder as many times as they can, with the goal being that everyone in the room get as many taps/points as they can. They are to use their clasped hand to get points, not their free hand. Usually the pairs struggle and push against each other's hands in an attempt to get as many points as they can. After about 20 seconds of this, stop them and demonstrate how it could have been accomplished with all getting many points if they had worked together by going back and forth and tapping each other's shoulders.

Debrief:

Why did you not cooperate with each other?

Would cooperation have created a “win-win” situation?

How does this concept apply to a real life example?

Conflict Resolution Activity 3

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down

Purpose: To train the students with an event on conflict management and to illustrate that the fact that people sometimes erroneously assume that conflict or competition is necessary to resolve a problem or situation.

Materials Needed: None

Total Time Required: 15 minutes

Group Size: Two students per group

Instructions: Start the activity by telling the students to turn to the person sitting next to them and take that person's hand like this. Show the students your hand and the hand of a volunteer, holding them as you would if you were going to thumb wrestle. **Do not say thumb wrestle, or put your thumb in a way that appears you are going to thumb wrestle.** Do not in any way indicate that you will be thumb wrestling. Once the partners have positioned their hands properly, tell them "each of you is to get your partner's thumb down like this." To demonstrate, model the position alone by moving your thumb down to a resting position against your index finger. Do not use your other hand to push the thumb down. By this time, most students will assume they are thumb wrestling and they will believe this is the only way to accomplish the task- through conflict.

Ask the students to reposition their hands as they did during step 1, and then say "begin." If there is an odd number of students, the facilitator should work with the student by following their lead.

After one person from each pair has won, ask the students that are winners to raise their hands, and then ask the losers to raise their hands.

Next ask the students to watch as you and a volunteer model the correct procedure by saying, "lets try putting both our thumbs down together." Model the procedure with your volunteer, showing it with no conflict involved.

Debrief:

What did you assume that you were supposed to do in this activity? How does your assumption differ from what you just saw?

How did you feel when you and your partner were trying to meet the objective?

How did you feel immediately after you were finished?

What did you think once you saw the cooperative approach to meeting the objective?

What does this activity tell you about conflict?

What have you learned that will help you the next time you approach conflict?

Variations: This activity may be used when learning is blocked through the interference of other dynamics in the group. For example, it may be used as an intervention with an ongoing team when the members are experiencing interpersonal conflict or are battling one another instead of the team problem. The participants may be assembled into two groups, one based on competition and the other based on cooperation. The facilitator then addresses the differences in processing.