

INTRODUCING CONFLICT RESOLUTION



AGENDA

- Starter
- What Is Conflict?
- Conflict in the News
- Freeze Frame
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will define “conflict” and identify the stages of conflict.

Students will identify conflict triggers.

Students will analyze the role of emotions in conflict.

Students will set goals for reducing conflict in their own lives.

Materials Needed

- A dictionary (Part I)
- One copy of a current news article describing a conflict for each student (Part II)
- One copy of “The Stages of Conflict” activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet for each student (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Read the following scenario to students:

Tatiana and Desmond are the top students in their grade. They have competed against each other for the highest grades in every subject, and they both want to be the class valedictorian. They try to outdo each other. They try to impress their teachers. They taunt each other before tests. One day before a test, the teasing between Tatiana and Desmond escalates into a full-blown shouting match.

Tell students that, at times, conflict can actually produce positive results. Ask students what positive outcomes might result from this situation. (Students might respond: Tatiana and Desmond might learn how to solve their problem, work together to help each other do better, and begin to recognize their similarities rather than their differences.)

Tell students that in the next few lessons they will practice resolving conflicts in a way that can produce positive results.

Part I What Is Conflict? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students define “conflict” and identify their own conflict triggers.

1. Students create a conflict web.

Ask students what they think of when they hear the word “conflict.” Encourage them to consider situations that create conflict, how they feel when they are involved in conflict, the results of conflict, and so on. Write student responses where everyone can see, grouping similar responses to create a web or a cluster.

2. Students define “conflict.”

When students have exhausted their ideas, ask them to review the web or cluster on the board and suggest a definition for “conflict.” Write student responses.

Then, ask a volunteer to look up the word “conflict” in the dictionary. A dictionary definition might read “mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or demands.” Have students review their definition and add to it or change it as needed. Lead students to recognize the important idea that conflict refers primarily to the mental struggle between two people. Point out that a physical struggle, according to this definition, is most likely the result of a mental struggle that escalates out of control.

3. Students consider the relationship between stress and conflict.

Ask students to explain the meaning of the saying, “That was the straw that broke the camel’s back.” Lead students to recognize that when people are feeling burdened, a small incident might “break” them.

Explain to students that stress is like a burden and can be the catalyst that turns a small conflict into an out-of-control situation. Ask students to recall the sources of stress that they discussed in “Lesson 4: Improving Well-Being” of the Confidence Building module. (Students should mention problems at school, problems on the job, and pressure from friends or family.) Tell students that many sources of stress are common to conflict situations.

Point out to students that the relationship between conflict and stress is reciprocal—conflict is stressful and stress can provoke conflict. When we feel stressed, we are more likely to let conflict escalate. Review with students the stress management, breathing, exercise, and relaxation techniques they discussed in “Lesson 4: Improving Well-Being” of the Confidence Building module. Tell students that using these strategies to reduce stress can help them more effectively manage conflict.

4. Students identify recurring situations of conflict in their lives.

Tell students that conflict is a natural part of life that we can learn from and, in turn, try to make into a positive experience. One strategy for managing conflict is to be ready for it.

Ask students to consider the situations in their lives that involve conflict. Instruct students to write down recurring conflict situations and to pay close attention to the factors that trigger conflict in their lives.

Tell students to write down several specific conflict situations that they want to manage more effectively. Explain that they will keep this list and refer to it at the end of each lesson in this module.

Part II Conflict in the News (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify the stages of conflict.

1. Students review a conflict in the news.

Tell students that one place where we can almost always find recurring examples of conflict is in the news. Distribute copies of a current news article that describes a conflict. Read the article aloud for your students or give them time to read it independently.

Where all students can see, create an outline of the story. Elicit from students a step-by-step description of what happened. If details are missing, have students make inferences as to what probably took place.

2. Students identify the stages of conflict in the news story.

Distribute “The Stages of Conflict” activity sheet to students. Instruct them to compare the stages of conflict on the activity sheet with the outline they created for the news article. Point out that these stages do not always happen in the same order and that the evolution of a conflict can be recursive (for example, the parties involved can return to dialogue several times). Have students label each event from the news article with the corresponding stage of conflict. Explain that one event might represent more than one stage of conflict.

Tell students that at each stage of conflict, there is the potential for the situation to be resolved. Say, “Controlling emotions at each stage is essential to ensuring that the conflict does not get out of control.”

Part III Freeze Frame (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students demonstrate the effects of emotion in conflicts and set personal conflict resolution goals.

1. Students develop conflict-situation role plays.

Brainstorm with students examples of conflict situations that they have encountered. Write the situations in a place where everyone can see. Encourage students to describe the situations using the stages of conflict from Part II.

Divide the class into groups of four or five. Tell students that each group is going to prepare and perform a role play of a conflict situation. Assign each group a scenario from the class suggestions or use one of the following:

- A student is watching television with a family member. The family member wants to watch a different show.
- Two friends go out to eat. When the check comes, one of the friends says that he doesn't have enough money and asks to borrow some. This has happened many times before.
- A younger sibling wants to join in an older sibling's activities. The older sibling wants to be left alone.

Allow the groups several minutes to prepare their role plays.

2. Students perform the role plays.

When students are finished preparing, explain that they are going to perform the role plays. Also explain that while the groups are performing, you will tell them to freeze at certain points. When you do, the group will stop acting to participate in a class discussion.

Distribute one copy of the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet to each student. Tell them that they are going to observe the effect that emotions have in each role play and that they can refer to the activity sheet to specifically describe what they are seeing.

Ask the first group to present its role play. While the group is performing, watch for evidence of the different stages of conflict. When a stage of conflict arises, tell the group to freeze and elicit students’ observations regarding the buildup of the conflict. Have students use the “Vocabulary of Feelings” activity sheet to identify the specific emotions involved. Have the students performing identify the emotions that they are portraying and what they will do next. Discuss with the class alternative reactions to those emotions that might have better results. As the role play proceeds, discuss how the conflict is either escalating or defusing.

3. Students discuss the effects of inappropriate reactions during conflicts.

Ask students for examples of inappropriate reactions during conflicts. (Student responses might include laughing when someone gets hurt, laughing at someone who is yelling at you, showing anger when someone has given you a gift.) Elicit from students that inappropriate reactions are demonstrations of feelings that do not fit a situation. Ask students if they think that a conflict escalates or defuses when one party demonstrates an inappropriate reaction. Point out that being aware of other people’s emotions at each stage of a conflict will help to avoid demonstrating inappropriate reactions.

4. Students apply their observations from the role plays to determine real-life conflict resolution goals.

Tell students to refer to the lists that they created at the end of Part I, in which they identified recurring situations of conflict in their lives. Tell students to choose three of their recurring conflicts to focus on.

Direct students to think about these situations in light of the role plays that they just conducted. Guide them to think about the following:

- Are any of these situations similar to the situations in the role plays?
- Are the emotions discussed in the role plays related to situations in their lives?
- What alternative reactions might reduce conflict?

Guide students to set appropriate goals for reducing conflict in the areas that they have identified. Remind them that effective goals are specific, measurable, realistic, and include a deadline. Remind students that they will refer to their conflict resolution goals several more times in this module.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask the class to recall the stages of conflict. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Conflict is a mental struggle that results from opposing needs.
- One strategy for managing conflict is to know what situations trigger conflict for you.
- Controlling emotions is essential to defusing conflict.
- Demonstrating inappropriate reactions escalates conflict.

Student Assessment

1. What role does emotion play in conflict?
2. Describe each of the six stages of conflict in order.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Do not look back in anger, or forward in fear, but around in awareness.” —James Thurber

As a class, discuss how this quote relates to controlling emotions during conflict and recognizing what situations cause conflict for individual students.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

The definition of “conflict” mentioned in this lesson states that it is a mental struggle between opposing sides. Have students illustrate (through movement, songs, essays, poems, images, etc.) the definition.

Have students perform or explain their illustrations.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students focus on the goals they set for conflict resolution and write about how confident they are that they can achieve their goals. Have them describe why they set these particular goals.

Discuss how the students’ values impacted their conflict resolution goals.

Math Connection

Everywhere we turn, there are stories about conflict. Have students create charts and graphs that depict the types of conflicts that exist in our lives.

Tell students to read the top stories of a news site every day for one week. Have students graph how often stories featuring conflict appear during that week.

Homework

Write the following words and their definitions on the board: “confrontation,” “compromise,” “withdraw,” “settlement,” and “arbitration.”

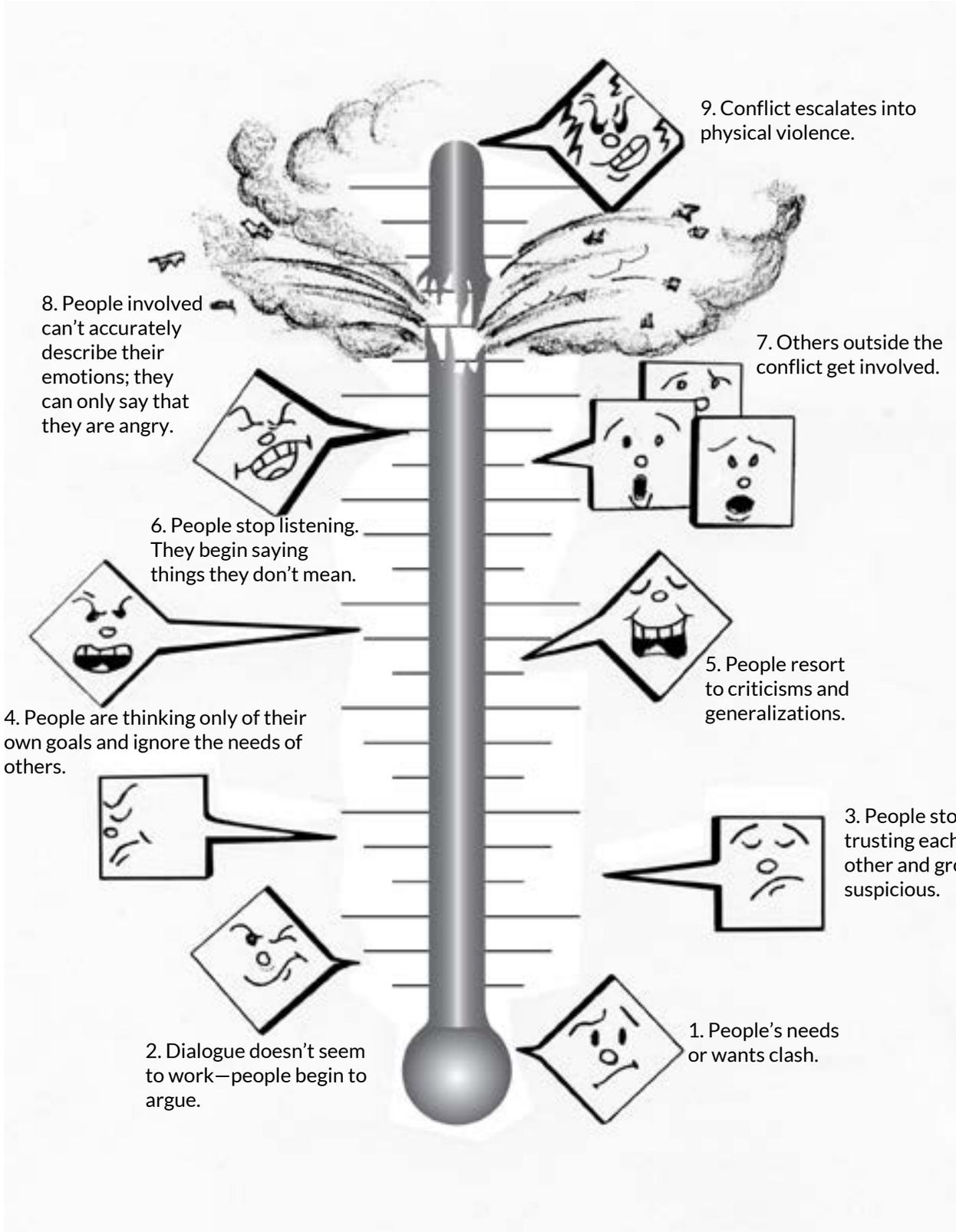
Have students look up the definition of each word and write a few sentences describing their role in conflict.

Additional Resources

Have students read the scene from J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* in which Holden Caulfield gets into a fight with his roommate, Stradlater.

Have students discuss the emotions that Holden was feeling and what he could have done to control those emotions.

THE STAGES OF CONFLICT



VOCABULARY OF FEELINGS

A

Afraid
Aggressive
Annoyed
Anxious
Apathetic
Apologetic
Apprehensive
Ashamed
Audacious

B

Bashful
Bold
Bored
Brave

C

Calm
Cautious
Cheerful
Comfortable
Competent
Confident
Confused
Curious
Cynical

D

Decisive
Depressed
Determined
Disappointed
Disapproving
Disgusted
Distressed

E

Ebullient
Ecstatic
Embarrassed
Energetic
Enraged
Enthusiastic
Envious
Excited
Exhausted

F

Friendly
Frightened
Frustrated

G

Grateful
Greedy
Guilty

H

Happy
Helpless
Hopeful
Horrified

I

Impatient
Incompetent
Indecisive
Indifferent
Innocent
Insecure
Inspired
Insulted
Intimidated
Irritated

J

Jealous
Joyous

L

Lazy
Listless
Lonely

M

Marvelous
Mischievous
Miserable
Morose

N

Negative
Nervous

O

Oblivious
Optimistic
Overwhelmed

P

Paranoid
Peaceful
Perplexed
Petrified
Proud
Puzzled

R

Reckless
Regretful
Relaxed
Restless

S

Sad
Satisfied
Secure
Serene
Shocked
Shy
Silly
Skeptical
Sleepy
Sluggish
Smart
Stimulated
Stupefied
Subdued
Sullen
Suspicious
Surprised
Sympathetic

T

Tense
Tentative
Timid
Tranquil
Trusting

U

Uncomfortable
Undecided

W

Wary
Whimsical
Worried

Z

Zealous