

MANAGING ANGER IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS



AGENDA

- Starter
- What Makes You Angry?
- I Said...I Meant
- Alternate Ending
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify situations that make them angry and consider ways to reduce or control anger.

Students will identify the real meaning behind words exchanged in conflict situations.

Students will analyze a clip depicting a conflict that turns to anger and violence.

Materials Needed

- Masking tape and a small rubber ball or golf ball (Starter)
- One copy of the “I Said...I Meant” activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- A movie or news clip depicting a conflict that turns to violence or anger (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Before class, use masking tape to make a circle about two feet in diameter on the floor of the classroom. Begin class by showing students the small ball and telling them that their challenge is to roll the ball from about 10 feet away and aim for the center of the circle. Explain that they will have two chances, but if the ball stops short on the first try, they will forfeit the second try.

Have students take turns rolling the ball into the circle. When students are finished trying, elicit the observation that most students rolled the ball past the circle. Ask students why they think this happened. Lead them to recognize that when they were afraid of falling short, they tended to overcompensate.

Say, "The ball is like our emotions in situations with conflict; we often overcompensate because we are afraid of losing. Once we let our emotions reach this level, it's hard to stop and back away. One possible effect of this is excessive anger."

Explain to students that today they will discuss ways to keep anger in check during a conflict situation.

Part I What Makes You Angry? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify situations that make them angry and consider ways to reduce or control anger.

1. Students identify situations that evoke emotions of anger.

Ask students, "What makes you feel angry?" Encourage students to list as many specific situations as possible. Write student responses where everyone can see.

Then ask students, "How do you know when you are angry?" (Students might respond: I just feel mad, my tone of voice gets sharper, my voice increases in volume, my muscles become tense, my heart starts racing, I start to sweat.) Explain to students that these are physiological indications that a person is experiencing anger. Many people have those responses.

2. Students identify ways to reduce or control anger.

Ask students, "If so many different situations have the potential to evoke anger in us, how can we become better able to manage our anger and function more effectively?" Lead students to recognize that there are specific techniques that we can use to control our anger.

Elicit from students actions they can take to limit their anger. Write their suggestions in a place where everyone can see. (Students might respond: controlled breathing, counting to 10, taking a walk, talking with someone, listening to relaxing music, exercising, etc.)

When students have exhausted their ideas, have them select five techniques from the list that they think might work well for them. Have them write those techniques on a piece of paper. Tell students to hold on to their lists for use at the end of the lesson.

Part II I Said...I Meant (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify the underlying meaning behind words exchanged in conflict situations.

1. Students read a conflict scenario.

Distribute copies of the “I Said...I Meant” activity sheet to each student. Have students fold the activity sheet in half on the dotted line, so that the bottom half is not visible while students are reading the top half.

Ask two volunteers to read the dialogue between Brenda and Maria, supplying appropriate tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions.

When the volunteers are finished, ask students to explain what happened in this scenario and identify the problem that was causing the conflict. (Students might respond: Brenda wanted to do a favor for Maria. Maria is angry at Brenda for leaving the baby at home to get milk.)

Ask the class to describe the tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions of the two volunteers and elicit comments about how their nonverbal messages reflected their feelings.

2. Students consider the unspoken thoughts and emotions behind the conflict.

Tell students to unfold the activity sheet to expose the dialogue that includes the characters’ real thoughts and feelings in italics. Ask two volunteers to read the italicized parts of the dialogue, using nonverbal messages that reflect what they are saying.

Ask the class to comment on how the volunteers’ nonverbal communication differed from the first reading and what that might say about the characters’ emotions. (Student responses should include emotions other than anger, such as amazement, frustration, and anxiety.)

3. Students recognize that controlling anger allows people to communicate more effectively.

Ask students why the characters in the scenario didn’t just say what they meant. Lead them to understand that sometimes our anger leads us to speak without thinking. Point out to students how differently this conflict might have ended if the two people had communicated what they really meant.

Remind students of “the straw that broke the camel’s back” and the role of stress in conflict situations. Guide students to the realization that, in conflict situations, there are often hidden emotions and events that contribute to the intensity of the conflict. Suggest that students be aware of the underlying feelings that contribute to conflict situations. Tell students that being aware of the emotions that are involved in a conflict will help them to communicate more accurately.

Part III Alternate Ending (25 minutes)

Purpose: Students analyze a video clip depicting a conflict that turns to anger or violence.

1. Students view a clip of a conflict that results in anger or violence.

Tell students that they are going to watch a short clip showing a conflict that results in anger or violence. Provide students with any necessary background information for the scene they are going to watch.

Instruct students to look for the following as they watch the clip:

- What is the conflict?
- What are the needs or wants of the opposing parties?
- What did they say about the issue or the conflict?
- What do you think they meant?

2. Students rewrite the scene to reduce the anger presented.

When students have finished viewing the clip, discuss their responses to the above questions. Then, instruct them to refer to their lists of anger management techniques from Part I to suggest actions that might have reduced the characters’ anger and avoided the violence portrayed in the video.

Allow students about 10 minutes to write an outline for what might have occurred if anger management techniques had been used.

3. Students discuss the role of anger in the media and in real life.

Ask students to share their outlines. After students have shared their writing, ask the class how the clip would be different if the conflict had been resolved as they proposed. (Students might respond: it would be boring, no one would go see it, there would be no action, etc.)

Point out that reducing conflict might not make for a good movie. Lead students to recognize that while conflict and anger make for interesting fiction, they can be destructive if not managed properly in real life.

4. Students revisit their conflict resolution goals.

Have students revisit the goals for conflict resolution that they established in lesson 1 of this module. Have them identify situations in which miscommunication contributes to conflict. Guide them to consider how anger management could reduce the intensity and impact of their conflict situations.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to name three anger management techniques that can be used to reduce anger in conflict situations. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Sometimes our anger leads us to say and do things that we don't mean.
- Using anger management techniques to control our anger can help us improve how we communicate.

Student Assessment

1. List three positive methods for relieving anger.
2. Describe a conflict you have been in from the other person's point of view.
3. List three examples of violence you have recently seen in the media. How can seeing this violence affect viewers?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Anger is a momentary madness, so control your passion or it will control you.”

Have students discuss the meaning of this quote and how it feels to be controlled by anger.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students create a checklist of actions to take when they feel themselves becoming angry.

Ask students to share the checklist they have written with the class. Allow students to offer suggestions to each other.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about the amount of impact the movie industry has on people. Have them discuss whether we are reflections of what is in the movies or if the movies are a reflection of real life. They should also discuss if the movies accurately reflect how people handle anger.

Discuss this topic as a whole class.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students create posters to help younger children control their anger in conflict situations and to help them choose words that accurately reflect what they are feeling. Remind students to use language at the appropriate readability level of the intended audience.

Have students mail the posters, along with explanations of them, to elementary school teachers in your district.

Homework

Have students keep track of the number of times they feel angry in one week. Have them write what was happening when they became angry and how their bodies reacted to their anger.

Ask students to create a plan for avoiding situations in which they become angry and managing the way they react to anger.

Additional Resources

Have students read “Listen to Your Feelings (They Are Trying to Tell You Something)” from *Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff...and It’s All Small Stuff* by Dr. Richard Carlson. This passage is about paying attention to what you are feeling and why you are feeling that way.

Have students discuss the benefits of knowing why they feel as they do.

I SAID...I MEANT

Brenda and Maria are yelling at each other...

BRENDA: "I went to the store because I had to buy milk for Shante."

MARIA: "I can't believe you did that! You're so stupid, leaving my baby sister by herself!"

BRENDA: "...but I asked Jeremy to watch her while I was out."

MARIA: "I don't even know why I trusted you to watch her anyway!"

BRENDA: "Fine! Take care of your own baby sister!"

.....

They meant...

BRENDA: "I went to the store because I had to buy milk for Shante."
I was worried because there wasn't any milk in the house for the baby.

MARIA: "I can't believe you did that! You're so stupid, leaving my baby sister by herself!"
It's so dangerous to leave a baby alone! I'm terrified that something could have happened to her!

BRENDA: "...but I asked Jeremy to watch her while I was out."
I'm stupid? What kind of sister takes care of her baby sister but doesn't have milk in the house?

MARIA: "I don't even know why I trusted you to watch her anyway!"
I had doubts about leaving Shante with her anyway. I remember the time she let her cry in the crib. I never said anything, but I was really annoyed.

BRENDA: "Fine! Take care of your own baby sister!"
And I was only doing her a favor! Forget it. I'll never help her out again.