

## Conflict Resolution Lesson Plan for Middle Schoolers and Teens

**Objective:** Students learn:

1. Helpful steps for conflict resolution
2. How to find appropriate solutions for common conflicts
3. How to become conflict managers through mature and considerate behavior

At the end of the lesson, students will know how to:

- Stop, regroup, and respond to the situation appropriately. When a conflict occurs, students will know to calm down so they can handle the situation rationally rather than when emotions are running high.
- Open up discussion to identify and clarify exactly what the source of conflict is. Students will know to use language that does not demean the other person and that they can express their emotions in a mature way by using 'I' messages rather than only blaming the other party.
- Listen to the other person's side, and consider how they would feel in their place.
- Volunteer possible solutions to the problems. Students will know to take turns and cooperate with the other party to brainstorm different ideas that would resolve the conflict.
- Evaluate the solutions together and implement the best one. Students will use an appropriate solution that is fair, fits the conflicts, and that both parties are satisfied with.

These five steps (SOLVE – Stop, Open up discussion, Listen, Volunteer solutions, Evaluate and implement a solution) can help students negotiate conflict in a healthy way.

### Introduction

Begin by discussing what conflict is. While a conflict can be defined as an argument or dispute, teachers should elaborate on different types of conflict and the different ways conflict can manifest itself.

- Conflict can occur between individuals, groups or a combination of these.
- Conflict can be verbal, can occur via technology (Facebook, texting, email), can involve personal property, can involve personal beliefs or philosophies, or may be the result of anger, jealousy, or other emotions.
- People often have a conflict style – their natural tendency when faced with a problem. Common tendencies include avoidance, accommodation, compromising, collaborating or standing firm on the issue.
- Tweens and teens can have volatile emotions and feel the urge to lash out physically during a conflict. Teachers should establish that violent behavior is not acceptable and never an appropriate way to handle conflict.

## Instruction

Ask students to identify ways they can stop, regroup, and calm down when a conflict occurs. Possibilities include:

- Getting away from the situation for a period of time
- Going for a short walk or jog
- Listening to some favorite music
- Take some deep breaths
- Get a drink of water
- Splash cold water on your face

1. Ask students to provide ideas on how they should act once they have calmed down and regrouped. At this point they can open up discussion with the other party to identify the conflict and talk about the issue. Discuss the aspects that students should consider at this point, such as:

- Being respectful and considerate of the other person.
- Keeping the focus on the conflict itself and use concrete facts.
- Discussing emotions using 'I' messages. Beginning a sentence with "I felt" expresses emotion without making the other party feel defensive.
- Keeping emotions in check during the conversation.
- Being accountable for their actions. If someone was clearly wrong, he should be accountable for his actions and apologize.

2. Listening to other the party is an important part of the conflict resolution process, but can be especially difficult for middle school and teen students. A student may feel very strongly in the event of a conflict that she is right and not be willing to listen to the other person. Discuss good listening skills and how the following can help the conflict resolution process go more smoothly:

- View the conflict from the other person's point of view and imagine how she is feeling.
- Remain focused on the issue at hand.
- Remember to stay calm, taking a few deep breaths or a break in conversation if needed.

3. Ask students to provide examples of conflicts and discuss what possible solutions would work. Talk about how volunteering possible solutions encourages corroboration and helps both parties proactively seek resolution.

- Encourage students to try to think of options in which both parties gain something from the resolution.
- Promote creative problem-solving and outside-the-box solutions.
- Acknowledge that both parties may have to compromise in order to come to an effective resolution.
- Suggest students consider pros and cons of each possible idea.

4. Evaluating the proposed solutions and implementing the best one is the last stage of the conflict resolution process. Students will need to identify which solution fits best. They should keep these things in mind:
  - The solution should be appropriate for the conflict.
  - Both parties should be mutually satisfied with the solution.
  - Acknowledge that sometimes the solution for a conflict is to agree to disagree. If both parties are unable to agree and come to another appropriate solution, it may be the only choice rather than continuing with the conflict.

### **Activity: Conflict Resolution Worksheet**

Using the worksheet, students show what they have learned by identifying the steps in the conflict resolution process and proposing solutions for the conflict scenarios described.

## Conflict Resolution Worksheet

Answer the questions with True or False.

- \_\_\_\_\_ The first step in the conflict resolution process is to make sure the other person knows exactly how I am feeling.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is important to listen to and try to understand the other person's point of view, even if I'm angry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If the other person was wrong, there is no point in trying to resolve the conflict.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I should begin talking with the other person by telling them what they did wrong.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The best solution is one in which both people are satisfied with the result.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't need to apologize for anything I did as long as we come to a solution.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nothing positive ever comes from conflict.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It's important to calm down before trying to resolve the conflict.

Choose the best answer.

The first step in the conflict resolution process is:

- A. Telling the other person how we should solve the problem.
- B. Stop, calm down, and regroup.
- C. Deciding who was right.
- D. Talking about the problem on Facebook.

It's important to:

- A. Make sure I don't get in trouble because of a conflict.
- B. Be accountable for poor choices I've made and apologize when I'm wrong.
- C. Never back down.
- D. Tell my friends what the other person did wrong when there is a conflict.

When trying to resolve a conflict:

- A. It's important that I listen to the other person and consider his or her point of view.
- B. I should always just let the other person have their way so there's no problem.
- C. It's not important to talk about my feelings.
- D. It's ok to ignore the other person's ideas if I don't like them.

In order to make conflict resolution productive:

- A. I should get it over with as quickly as possible.
- B. Everyone involved should just ignore their feelings.
- C. One person should be happy with the solution.
- D. It's important that I focus on the issue and stick to the facts.

Write down your ideas for possible solutions to the following conflict scenarios.

1. A friend says something mean about you on Facebook.
2. Your brother borrowed your ipod charger and now it's broken.
3. You find out one of your friends had a party and didn't invite you.
4. All of your friends are going to a party, but your parents won't let you go.
5. A friend took your phone and started reading your texts.
6. Your sister won't let you change the channel to watch your favorite show on TV.