

Introduction To Teaching Conflict Resolution Skills 25

[Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)

Learning to work through interpersonal conflicts successfully may be the single most important skill for personal, family, and career success. It may also be the most challenging skill to learn and do well. Misunderstandings, impasses, and conflicts are inevitable. We are not born knowing how to communicate and resolve interpersonal conflicts effectively. Fortunately, the skills of self-awareness, self-disclosure, trust and trustworthiness, the ability to effectively listen, ask genuine inquiry questions, send clear messages using “I Statements,” and collaborate, negotiate, and problem-solve with others are all skills that can be taught, learned, and mastered. See the Conflict Resolution Skills Packet: The Skills Required to Successfully Resolve Interpersonal Conflicts ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)) for a detailed description of the essential skills needed to resolve interpersonal conflicts successfully. See the Conflict Resolution Skill Card ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)) for a two-page summary of these skills.

The emotional and social health skills are interrelated. To have healthy, growth-enhancing relationships, it is essential to be self-aware. We need to be aware and accept what we are feeling and thinking and why. We must be aware of our values, strengths, needs, weaknesses, personal and relationship problems, what gives us a sense of purpose and meaning, and the environments, activities, and relationships that generate pleasant feelings and those that create unpleasant feelings. If we are unaware or do not accept our feelings or who we are, we will not communicate those parts of ourselves to others. We will try to hide them from ourselves and others, and it will be impossible to successfully work through misunderstandings, conflicts, and impasses in relationships. In addition, we need to be aware of our styles of managing interpersonal conflict and their impact on us and our relationships. We also need to manage our feelings in healthy ways, especially our feelings of disappointment, frustration, and anger toward others, so as not to take them out on them or others. Striving to work through misunderstandings and conflicts in relationships is an act of self-management. It requires that we make decisions, set goals, and apply relationship skills to resolve relationship problems.

We need to be competent in the following skills in order to be able to work through interpersonal conflicts:

1. Knowing what we are feeling and why we feel that way, what we think and why, and what our needs and values are (Self-Awareness).
2. Being an effective listener and communicating that we are listening to know and understand others (Active Listening).
3. Asking genuine inquiry questions when we don’t fully understand (Genuine Inquiry Questions)
4. Speaking in ways that will make others want to listen to us, understand us, consider what we have to say, and possibly change their behavior to help meet our needs (I Statements).

If your students are not already competent in using these skills, it is recommended that you teach them before beginning these learning experiences (see the Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships). In addition, it is suggested that you read the Conflict Resolution Reading ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)) before beginning.

Teaching Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Skills

Social-emotional skills can be learned if they are modeled and systematically taught by teachers. If the skills are taught, and if students are given multiple opportunities to practice the skills in the classroom, process their use of the skill, receive feedback, and use them in their lives outside the classroom, they will be able to master them, and these skills can become an integral part of their lives. Outlined below are the steps in teaching a skill. For a full explanation of teaching skills, see [How To Teach SES Skills](#) in the [How To Teach Social-Emotional Skills Module](#).

Helping Students See the Need for the Skill

Providing students with a rationale for learning a new skill and relating it to their past, present, or future experiences can help them see a need to learn it.

Ensuring Students Understand What the Skill Is

Skills need to be specific, observable, and describable.

Setting Up Repetitive Practice Sessions

Students need a chance to 'try on' the new skill and see how it fits. We can't just ask our students to talk about a new skill. Like a coach and music teacher, we need to give them a chance to practice it. This means having students practice the skill repeatedly. Most skill-development learning experiences provide students with the opportunity to role-play those skills in class.

Ensuring That Students Process Their Use of the Skills and Receive Feedback Whenever Possible

Practicing is not enough. Students must be given time to reflect on and process their use of the skills to determine what they did well and what they need to do better the next time they use them. Whenever possible, students should be given feedback on the quality of their use of the skill. Many skill development learning experiences utilize self-evaluation and student observers/coaches.

Apply the Skills in Real-Life Situations

It is not enough to have students role-play the skills only in class. At some point, students need to start using the skills in real-life situations. They must be given opportunities to apply skills in real life outside of class. Using skills in real-life situations, processing the results, and modifying their response is necessary and must be continuous and ongoing.

After completing many learning experiences, students can set a goal to apply a skill and change their behavior outside of school. Behavior change projects and assessments can be very simple or very complex. The simplest behavior change project involves using the [My Goals Log](#), in which students set a goal and evaluate their progress at the midpoint and again at the end of the project.

More complex projects involve students developing and implementing a plan to change their behavior, monitoring their progress over time using self-monitoring charts, and self-assessing their effort, progress, and/or the extent to which they completed the project. See the [Social-Emotional Skills Projects Module](#), the [Parent Communication Project Module](#), and the [Parent Conflict Resolution Project Module](#) for examples of complex projects.

Assessment, Evaluation, & Grading:

See [How To Assess & Grade SES Skills](#) in the [Assessment & Grading Module](#) for different ways for students to self-assess and for you to evaluate the completeness and quality of their work, their understanding of concepts and skills, and their level of self-awareness and self-insight. Additional methods for students to self-assess the extent to which they met their goals, the effort they put into meeting them, and the progress they made are included.

Mastering social-emotional skills is extremely complex. These skills cannot be mastered in a few classes. Below are the learning experiences found in this module. The more time given to teaching these skills, the greater the chance students will master them. Most of you have time for only some of these learning experiences. You will need to choose those that best meet your students' needs and modify them accordingly.

Conflict Resolution Learning Experiences, Readings, & Skill Cards

Conflict Resolution Reading ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This reading provides background information for teachers and students regarding the different types and sources of conflict, the possible outcomes of conflict, the reasons why individuals don't initiate conversations when the conflict arises, the problems with not addressing conflict, why attempts at conflict resolution go poorly, and what to do when we feel attacked, threatened, or defensive.

Conflict Resolution Skills Packet: The Skills Required to Resolve Interpersonal Conflicts ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This reading provides a detailed description of all the skills needed to resolve interpersonal relationship conflicts successfully. It includes examples of what to say and do for each skill.

Conflict Resolution Skills Card ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This 2-page skill card summarizes the skills needed to resolve interpersonal relationship conflicts successfully. It includes examples of what to say and do for each skill.

Types of Conflict LE ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This introduction to conflict aims to help students understand the different types and sources of conflict.

Conflicts My Peers & I Experience LE ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

The purpose of this learning experience is to increase students' understanding of the conflicts they and their peers experience or have experienced.

My Styles of Resolving Conflict ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

The purpose of this learning experience is for students to understand their styles of resolving interpersonal conflict, how they use different styles with different people, and to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their styles. Although it can be done as a stand-alone learning experience, it may be best used as a follow-up to the Conflicts My Peers & I Experience Learning Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)) while the conflicts they experience are still fresh in their minds.

- **Styles of Conflict Resolution Reading** ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This reading discusses the different styles of resolving conflict identified in the My Styles of Resolving Interpersonal Conflict ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)) and discusses the benefits and limitations of each style.

Conflict Resolution Discussion and Learning Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

The purpose of this discussion and learning experience is to help students understand the different ways conflicts may be resolved and the impact of each, why people avoid conflict and the harm that can result, why attempts at interpersonal conflict resolution go poorly, and what can be done to prevent that from happening.

Negotiate For Needs & Interests (Not Positions) Reading ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This reading provides an example of two high school students who negotiate based on their positions and not their needs.

Negotiate For Needs & Interests (Not Positions) Learning Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This learning experience discusses the importance of negotiating for needs and interests (and not positions) when trying to resolve interpersonal conflicts. It provides two examples and an outline of how the needs of adolescents and parents may differ.

Conflict Resolution Step 1 Questions: Questions To Consider Before Having a Conflict Conversation ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This document outlines the questions to consider before having a conflict conversation. Answering these questions increases the chances of a successful resolution to the conflict.

Conflict Resolution Step 1 Questions: Questions To Consider Before Having a Conflict Conversation Skill Card ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This one-page skill card summarizes all the questions to answer before a conflict conversation.

Conflict Resolution Cases/Learning Experiences ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

High School Driving Case Learning Experiences ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

The purpose of these learning experiences is to help students “see” how the essential skills can be applied to resolve interpersonal conflicts successfully and to facilitate understanding of those skills. It is suggested that these learning experiences be completed before students apply these skills to their own lives.

High School Driving Case Role-Play ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This role-play demonstrated how conflict resolution skills can resolve a conflict between a parent and their high school adolescent.

High School Party Case Learning Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

It is suggested that this learning experience be used after students have completed the High School Driving Learning Experience and the Negotiate For Needs Learning Experience. Its purpose is to give students additional experience applying interpersonal conflict resolution skills.

Keeping Room Clean Case Learning Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

It is suggested that this learning experience be used after students have completed the High School Driving Learning Experience and the Negotiate For Needs Learning Experience. This learning experience aims to give students additional experience applying interpersonal conflict resolution skills.

Additional Conflict Resolution Cases Learning Experiences([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

It is suggested that this learning experience be used after students have completed at least the High School Driving Case learning experience and the Negotiate For Needs Learning Experience. It is also best for the High School Party Case and/or the Keeping The Room Clean Learning Case learning experiences to be completed first. The purpose of this learning experience is to give students additional experience applying interpersonal conflict resolution skills.

How To: Role-Playing, Observing, & Giving Feedback

Role-playing provides students the opportunity to practice the use of skills in class. Like a coach, we need to demonstrate the use of the skill, provide multiple opportunities for them to practice/role-play the skill, receive feedback on their use of the skill, and provide them a process to reflect on and analyze their use of the skill until they become proficient. Having students role-play, receive feedback, and reflect on and analyze their use of the skill will help them become proficient and internalize the skills.

Coaching, observing, and giving feedback are skills that need to be taught, just like other social-emotional skills. Below is a generic process for role-playing, coaching, observing, and giving feedback and how to teach these skills, including a reading, observing, and giving feedback skill cards, and observation forms. See [How To Teach SES Skills](#) document in the [How To Teach Social-Emotional Skills Module](#) for a thorough explanation of these steps and the benefits of role-playing, observing, and receiving feedback in mastering skills.

Role Playing, Coaching, Observing, & Giving Feedback Reading & Process ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#))

This reading discusses the benefits of role-playing, coaching, observing, and giving feedback, how to teach these skills, and the procedures for setting up classroom situations. It also provides an example of an observation form for listening and asking genuine inquiry questions.

Observing & Giving Feedback Skill Card ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#))

This skill card outlines the process for completing observation forms and giving specific, detailed feedback. It also provides specific examples.

Conflict Resolution Skills Observation Form ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#))

This observation form is used if you use observers when students role-play the [High School Driving](#), the [High School Party](#), the [Keeping Room Clean](#) cases, or other conflict situations you develop.

More Advanced Learning Experiences

([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

What To Do, Say, & Avoid When Feeling Defensive, Threatened, or Attacked Reading ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

When we are having a conflict conversation, it is easy to feel defensive; at times, we may feel emotionally threatened or attacked. This reading provides extensive information on what to say, do, and avoid when feeling defensive, threatened, or attacked, as well as examples of what to say when the other person is not taking our needs seriously, and what to say when we are wrong or have done or said something hurtful.

What To Do, Say, & Avoid When Feeling Defensive, Threatened, or Attacked Skill Card ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This skill card outlines what to say, do, and avoid when feeling defensive, threatened, or attacked, as well as examples of what to say when the other person is not taking our needs seriously and what to say when we are wrong or have done or said something that hurts someone.

Redirecting Conversations When Feeling Defensive, Threatened, or Attacked Learning Experience ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))

This learning experience aims to help students become skilled at redirecting conversations when they feel defensive, threatened, attacked, not listened to, or when the other person is not acting in good faith. Examples are also included of what to say if we are wrong or have done or said something hurtful.

Applying Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Skills In Real Life Situations ([SES Projects Module](#))

Apply Skills In Real Life Situations: Using the My Goals Log ([SES Projects Module](#))

My Goals Learning Experience ([SES Projects Module](#)). Students may develop and track goals by keeping a My Goals Log after several learning experiences in this module. It does not require as much time or as many assessments as the Parent Conflict Communication Project.

- **My Goals Log** ([SES Projects Module](#)).

Students use this log to write their goals, to assess how they are doing at a midpoint and what, if anything, they need to do to be more successful, and then to evaluate their success at the end of the project. The log keeps track of all goals they develop throughout the year.

Parent Conflict Resolution Project (PCRP)

[Parent Conflict Resolution Project Module](#)

Parent Conflict Resolution Project (PCRP) ([Parent Conflict Resolution Project Module](#))

This culminating learning experience provides students with the opportunity to use interpersonal conflict resolution skills in a real-life situation with a parent or guardian ([Parent Conflict Resolution Project Module](#)).

Materials For the Parent Conflict Resolution Project (PCRP)

- **Conflict Resolution Skill Card** ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)).
- This 2-page skill card summarizes the skills needed to successfully resolve interpersonal relationship conflicts. It includes examples of what to say and do for each skill.
- **Conflict Resolution Step 1 Questions: Questions to Consider Before Having a Conflict Conversation** ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)). Before having a conflict conversation, it is important to think about what we want to do, what we want to say and how, what our and the other person's true interests and needs are in this situation, what creative solutions we see to resolve this conflict satisfactorily, and to script beforehand what we will initially say.
- **Conflict Resolution Step 1 Questions: Questions To Consider Before Having a Conflict Conversation Skill Card** ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)). This one-page skill card summarizes all the questions to answer before a conflict conversation.
- **PCRP Parent Letter Template (& Signature Page)** ([Parent Conflict Resolution Project Module](#))
This letter aims to inform parents about the conflict conversation project and obtain their permission to participate. It also provides a list of resources for parents.
- **Parent Conflict Resolution Project Student Directions** ([Parent Conflict Resolution Project Module](#)). This document outlines the project directions for both teachers and students.
- **Parent Conflict Resolution Project Student Assessment** ([Parent Conflict Resolution Project Module](#)): Students complete this evaluation after the conversation and review it with their parent.
- **Parent Conflict Resolution Project Parent Assessment** ([Parent Conflict Resolution Project Module](#)). Parents complete this evaluation after the conversation and then review their assessment with their adolescent. This document also provides suggestions and examples for giving specific, detailed feedback.