

# **Redirecting Conversations When Feeling Defensive, Threatened, or Attacked Learning Experience 25**

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

### **To The Teacher:**

The purpose of this learning experience is 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 include what to say if we are wrong or have done or said something to hurt someone.

### **Procedure/Directions:**

1. Distribute the Redirecting Conversations When Feeling Defensive, Threatened, or Attacked Skill Card ( [Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)) and discuss and demonstrate how to redirect conversations. See the Redirecting Conversations Reading, ( [Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)), the How to Apologize Reading ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#) ), and the How to Apologize Skill Card ([Relationship Skills & Healthy Relationships](#) )for more information on how to redirect conversations and how to apologize.
2. Working in groups of 3-4, have students generate a list of things that have or would make them feel defensive, threatened, or attacked when they are trying to resolve a conflict or misunderstanding. Create a visible list. You may have them categorize their responses based on things said by parents, siblings, friends, and people in dating relationships.
3. Once you have generated a visible list and students understand how to redirect conversations, have each group write a response (one at a time) to the situations they have generated or from the list outlined below. Randomly call on students to role-play their response with you. If possible, continue the role-playing after their initial response. Ask all students to consider whether the responses effectively redirect the conversation to what the person is feeling and why, as well as to the real issues. You may also provide feedback on whether their response effectively helped you focus on what you are feeling and why, and whether the conversation was redirected to the real issue.
4. Remind students to focus on what the person said, not their personality, when giving feedback. Avoid judgmental words and statements such as “good,” “bad,” “excellent,” “poor,” etc. Avoid negative comments. For feedback to be helpful, it must be specific and detailed. People need to understand specifically what they did well, what they need to do better. Point out that if the person they're giving feedback to doesn't agree, they shouldn't argue or try to change their mind. If the person disagrees, they could summarize what they said and then ask them to share their perspective. For example: “So you think you redirected the conversation to what they were feeling and why they were feeling that way, is that right?” If they say “yes, ” they could respond by saying something like “okay” and leave it at that.

Examples of effective feedback include:

- *“Your redirection asked me what I was feeling and why. When you said that, it made me feel like you were taking this seriously.”*
- *“Your redirection asked me to help you understand why I am so angry with you, which made me feel listened to.”*
- *“What you said made me more frustrated with you”.*
- *“I don’t think you are listening to me”.*

Additional Situations To Role-Play:

- You are so stupid”.
- You never do anything right.”
- You never...”
- “You always...”
- “You always say you are going to do something then you never do”.
- “You can’t be trusted”.
- “You’re wrong”.
- “You are a bad friend”.
- “It’s your fault this happened”.
- “You never listen”.
- “All you care about is yourself”.
- “I’m so tired of always having to bring this up.
- “You keep pressuring me”.

Other Situations To Role Play:

- The person continues to attack you.
- You are having difficulty listening and need to take a break.
- You believe the other person is not acting in good faith, not listening to you, or not considering your needs.
- The conversation is going nowhere, and you don’t want to allow the person to continue talking to you like they are.
- You realize that you are wrong.
- You realize you have said or done something that hurt the other person.

## **Evaluating & Grading**

You can give a test/quiz by either reading several statements aloud that require redirection and have students write their responses as if they are redirecting the conversation, or provide them with statements in writing. Depending on the class size, you could call them up one at a time while working alone or in groups, and read them a situation. They would need to respond to redirect the conversation. Either a generic or specific rubric could be developed to assess their response.

## **Recommended Follow-Up**

1. To become proficient, students will need more time using these skills. It is suggested that beginning and ending minutes be used throughout the year to practice these skills. For example, students could pair up with someone sitting beside them. Describe a conflict conversation that needs to be redirected. Ask for volunteers or randomly call on students to role-play the situation with you. Provide feedback.
2. Periodically ask students how they are doing regarding redirecting conversations when they feel defensive, threatened, or attacked. Focus on what worked and didn't work and ask them what they need to do to improve.