

Conflict Resolution Discussion & Learning Experience 2025

[Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)

To the Teacher:

The purpose of this discussion 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. The information addressed in this learning experience is outlined in the Conflict Resolution Reading ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#)).

Procedure/Directions:

1. Review the different sources of conflict in interpersonal relationships. They include:
 - Misunderstandings.
 - Needs, desires, goals, and positions.
 - Power and control.
 - Resources. Conflicts over needs occur when one person, group, team, or nation wants something that seems to be in short supply. Examples include water, food, oil, or even a parking space.
 - Values. Conflicts over values occur when parties differ over their most deeply held beliefs, morals, and goals. Value conflicts may also occur within an individual. Value conflicts can be very difficult to resolve and sometimes can only be managed.
2. Discuss the different ways that conflicts may be resolved. They include:
 - You lose, the other person wins,
 - You win, the other person loses,
 - You both lose,
 - You both win
3. Conduct the following discussion:
 - Discuss how they (or others) would feel if, at the end of a conflict, they had lost and the other person had won, and how they think it would affect the relationship.
 - Discuss how they (or others) would feel if, at the end of a conflict, they had won and the other person had lost, and how they think it would affect the relationship.
 - Discuss how they (or others) would feel if they both lost at the end of a conflict, and how they think it would affect the relationship.
 - Discuss how they (or others) would feel if they both won at the end of a conflict and how they think it would affect the relationship.

4. Discuss the outcomes of a successful resolution to a conflict (win/win):
 - You and the other person are satisfied with the outcome
 - The relationship is stronger and both of you are better able to interact with each other
 - You both like and trust each other more
 - You both are better able to resolve future conflicts with other people
5. Brainstorm and record (as a whole class or in groups of 3) why people avoid having a conversation about an existing conflict. Generate a class list. Reasons include:
 - Lack of trust
 - Unwillingness to self-disclose
 - Fear of rejection
 - Fear of making the situation worse
 - In the past, the other person has communicated that they are not receptive to listening to you and/or resolving a conflict with you.
 - There is a power difference, and the other person has communicated in the past that they are not receptive to resolving conflicts.
 - Fear of finding things out about ourselves, such as our contributions to the conflict or other things about ourselves we don't want to know or acknowledge.
 - Fear of finding things out about the relationship we don't want to know or acknowledge.
 - Our style of conflict resolution is to deny it, accommodate the other person, or withdraw.
 - The belief that our feelings and needs aren't important, or that the other person's feelings and needs are more important than ours.
 - Having been unsuccessful in the past in trying to resolve conflicts.
 - Lacking the skills to resolve conflicts successfully.
6. Brainstorm and record (as a whole class or in groups of 3) why keeping things in and avoiding conflicts may be harmful. Reasons include:
 - Nothing Changes
 - We use excessive energy to keep our feelings down.
 - We cannot keep things in; they come out in other ways about other issues (usually smaller ones), or we go off on them.
 - We assume others know how we feel, but they don't because we have not told them. They are not mind readers.
 - Most people don't like conflict, but if there is a conflict, no amount of denying it will make it go away.

- We resent the other person. If something bothers me about you (I feel disappointed, hurt, or frustrated with something you have done or have not done), then there is a conflict in the relationship. If I don't initiate a conversation with you, I will keep information about the relationship to myself that you don't know about. I am being dishonest because I am not sharing my feelings with you, and I am not giving you an opportunity to change. How can you change if I have not told you how I feel and what is happening? Over time, I may resent you, which is unfair because you don't know what is going on, because I am not telling you, and giving you a chance to change. Resentment eats away at the relationship, and I may start pulling away and/or start being short with you about minor issues.
7. Brainstorm and record (as a whole class or in groups of 3) why attempts at interpersonal conflict resolution go poorly. Reasons include that we or others:
 - Blame
 - Assume bad intentions
 - Assume that we have all the information and we are right
 - Use "You Statements"
 - Try to control the other's response
 - Try to change them
 8. Depending on the developmental level of your students, discuss ways to prevent and overcome the reasons why attempts at interpersonal conflict resolution go poorly. See the Conflict Resolution Reading () for ways to prevent and overcome why attempts at interpersonal conflict resolution go poorly.
 9. Brainstorm and record (as a whole class or in groups of 3) what skills are needed to successfully work through interpersonal conflicts. After brainstorming, mention that you will now focus on the skills we all need to successfully work through interpersonal conflicts.

Suggested Learning Experience To Do Next:

- Negotiate For Needs, Not Positions LE ([Conflict Resolution Skills Module](#))