

LESSON 4

BREAKING IT UP PEACEFULLY

GOAL

- To learn to find peaceful solutions to conflicts

OBJECTIVES

- Brainstorming solutions to solve conflicts
- Negotiating solutions
- Mediating fairly and impartially
- Compromising for a win-win resolution

MATERIALS

- Chalkboard or easel pad
- Copies of Figure 4.9
- Newspapers or news magazines
- Student journals
- Enrichment: Art supplies

LESSON CYCLE

OPENING

Reviewing

In the last lesson you learned strategies to help you manage your own behavior. These involved balancing emotions and behaviors and developing self-control. You also examined the need to delay gratification and develop mature behaviors. You discussed difficulties that people commonly encounter in taking responsibility for managing their behavior, mentioning that stress, drugs, and negative feelings can prevent you from taking control of your own life. Finally, you generated a number of effective strategies for self-regulation/self-management.

Stating Objectives

Conflict is sometimes unavoidable. The lesson today is about how individuals involved in a conflict can use brainstorming, negotiation, mediation, and compromise to help them

solve their dispute. You will practice brainstorming solutions and selecting the most appropriate ones, then look at how conflicts can be resolved when two or more persons get together and listen to one another in a constructive working relationship. Sometimes it helps to invite an impartial mediator to help reach a compromise when two parties cannot agree. In a compromise we each give up a little of what we want to settle a conflict.

TEACHING AND GUIDED DISCUSSION

Providing Information

●—— Brainstorming solutions to solve conflicts

Conflict is a natural occurrence. Sooner or later you will disagree with someone over something. How can you resolve your conflicts?

Entertain responses.

To resolve conflicts, the persons involved must be willing to work cooperatively to settle their disagreement. They must STOP their bickering, THINK of the potential consequences if the conflict is not resolved, PLAN an agreeable solution, and periodically CHECK to evaluate how the solution is working. Resolving conflicts in this way helps the participants save face and avoid pushing each other into a corner. Why is it important to save face in an argument?

Elicit responses and discuss. Answers might concern preserving self-respect, maintaining the respect of others, and staying in favor with one's peer group.

Brainstorming is a good way to begin to work toward making a plan. Brainstorming involves searching for as many alternatives as possible—without judging them. In other words, you simply list and accept as many ideas as possible. There are no bad ideas. (*Point out that hateful or destructive ideas are unacceptable, however.*) In the brainstorming process you next group similar ideas into categories. At this stage you can cross out those that are impractical or impossible to implement. The final step involves deciding which ideas to prioritize and agreeing on a plan to solve the problem.

Let's examine some rules and the process for brainstorming.

Write the rules on the chalkboard or easel pad as you discuss them.

1. Withhold criticism; don't judge the ideas of others.
2. Welcome all legitimate ideas.
3. Let your ideas flow; be creative.
4. The more ideas, the better—you want quantity.
5. Group or combine similar ideas.
6. Improve on, or refine, the stated ideas.
7. Rule out impossible ideas.
8. Prioritize possible ideas.

●———— **Negotiating solutions**

Negotiation is another process to resolve conflict situations. It is an empowering procedure that does not invalidate or put down any member of the negotiation process. Each party works cooperatively to examine the problems and to find solutions without sacrificing the basic needs of any other individual involved in the conflict. Prior to negotiating, each party must STOP and examine his or her emotions. The individuals may need time to chill out before starting the process. Next they need to THINK about what is most important and what can be given up. Then they must have a PLAN to present and still keep an open mind. After the first encounter they need to CHECK the plan to see if it is acceptable. Does the plan now seem too rigid or impossible to implement? Can you think of some guidelines for successful negotiation?

List the students' responses on the chalkboard or easel pad. Answers might include the following.

Set aside angry and vindictive feelings.

State your requests calmly and reasonably.

Use active listening and restate what the other party is saying.

Refrain from arguing, name calling, and put-downs.

Avoid being a “know it all.” Ask the other party for possible solutions.

Brainstorm possible solutions.

Be ready to compromise and achieve a win-win resolution.

●———— **Mediating fairly and impartially**

When negotiation fails, mediation may be necessary. In the mediation process, a third person, who is not involved in the conflict, can help the parties reach an understanding. A mediator is like an umpire in a ball game or a referee in a boxing match. This impartial third party helps the disputants clarify their concerns and move from wanting to blame toward wanting to resolve differences.

Many schools have adopted *peer mediation programs*. Students (that is, peers) are trained to mediate in a dispute instead of having faculty members step in. The peers are often able to perceive the problems from a more relevant point of view. Things that might seem unimportant to adults are sometimes important to younger people. In peer mediation the parties first must agree to mediate to find a resolution. The mediator must be fair, remain neutral, and listen to each person's perception of the problem. The next step is to collect the opinions of each party, one at a time, and lay them on the negotiating table. A win-win situation must be the goal. The mediator presents options brainstormed by both parties. Together, the participants evaluate and discuss options. The last step is to create an agreement and to put it in writing for all parties to sign.

Let's brainstorm some of the things that are necessary for a successful mediation.

List students' responses on the chalkboard or easel pad. Answers might include the following.

Balancing emotions with reason

Being willing to mediate

Remaining impartial

Learning how each person perceives the problem

Listening to and consulting with each person involved in the conflict before reaching a solution

Using persuasion and not coercion

Working toward mutual acceptance

● — **Compromising for a win-win resolution**

What does *compromise* mean?

Elicit responses.

To compromise means to settle a difference by giving up something an individual wants. Each party gives a little and takes a little. Both must be willing to agree. In this way, each party feels like a winner. Saving face is important in a compromise; this is no time to “rub it in” and remind each other of what has been lost.

Let’s brainstorm the points to remember when compromising.

Elicit responses and list them on the chalkboard or easel pad. Here are some sample answers.

Compromising involves being reflective and assertive.

Compromising requires a Thinking Me (Adult) attitude and not an Impulsive Me (Child) attitude.

Compromising involves being willing to find a solution.

Issues must be discussed calmly and objectively.

Noticing perceptions is important. (“How would I feel if I were in your shoes?”)

Avoid hostile confrontations and accusations; practice self-control.

Be up-front and specify what you absolutely cannot accept. Honesty is the best policy.

Keep an open mind and be prepared to give up some of your conditions.

Respect your own rights and your opponent’s rights.

Do not surrender all your rights or requirements.

Be assertive; state what you want and what you are willing to give up.

Decide on what you can’t give up. Be fair and honest with yourself.

Let’s practice compromising. Suppose you have a conflict at work. Your boss wants you to work every Saturday from 3 P.M. to 10 P.M. Your boss thinks you are a good worker and does not want to lose you. You need some time off for a social life on Saturdays.

How can you compromise?

Elicit responses and discuss.

What do you think might happen if people are unable to compromise?

Elicit responses and discuss. Answers might include that people get hurt feelings, both lose, communication deteriorates, or violence may take place.

Monitoring Knowledge and Comprehension

Ask the following questions.

1. Why should all suggestions be accepted in brainstorming? What kinds of suggestions should not be considered? (*harmful suggestions, hateful suggestions*)
2. What can cause a negotiation procedure to break down?
3. Define the role of the mediator.
4. Discuss the following: “Some people think that compromise means to surrender your rights and to give in to the other party. Extend the hand of peace and love; mend fences, even if it means giving up some of your desires.”

Guiding Practice and Coaching

Divide the students into small groups, and have each group choose a recorder. Distribute a story about a recent conflict from a newspaper or news magazine, and direct each group to find a solution to the problem through negotiation and compromise. When the groups have finished, have the recorders present the solutions.

RETEACHING

Practicing Independently

Instruct the students to form triads. Assign each triad a problem situation from Figure 4.9. Explain that one student will confront (be the confronter), one person will be confronted, and the third will mediate (be the mediator). Instruct the disputants in each group that they have been unable to work out a solution on their own and now require the help of a mediator. The mediator’s role is to listen to the feelings of both parties and help them find a solution.

Evaluating and Giving Feedback

After the students have finished negotiating resolutions, ask the groups to report on their experiences to the entire class. Encourage class members to evaluate the resolutions reached and give feedback to the reporting triad.

CLOSING

Summary

Today we discussed conflicts and ways to resolve them. We learned how to brainstorm solutions as well as the processes involved in negotiation and mediation. We also practiced techniques for compromising and saving face when settling disputes.

Generalization

Instruct the students to record their feelings in a journal for 3 days during incidents of confrontation or conflict. They may choose to discuss these feelings with their “support” group (a group of sympathetic friends, relatives, or adults in the community).

ENRICHMENT

Use as many of these enrichment activities as time allows.

1. Discuss the alternatives available in the story that follows, and decide on the best solution. As an option, direct groups of students to draw a cartoon storyboard illustrating the scenario. The last cartoon caption must depict a solution.

Bob and Tony are good friends. Tony loans Bob his car to drive to work. The next day Tony notices a scratch on the hood. He accuses Bob of doing the damage. Bob denies it and says that the scratch was there when he picked up the car the previous day.

Some options for resolution follow.

Bob could pay for the damage and restore the friendship.

They could split the cost of the repair.

Tony could investigate Bob’s story.

Tony could pay for the damage and restore the friendship.

Tony could forget about it and never lend his car to Bob again.

They could ask a third person to mediate.

2. Discuss the following proverbs or sayings:

The end of war is peace. —Miguel de Cervantes

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.
—Matthew (5:9)

Our goal must be not peace in our time, but peace for all time. —Harry S. Truman

Peace on earth begins with peace within you. —Edna St. Vincent Millay

Those who are at war with others are not at peace with themselves.
—William Hazlitt

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself; nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Make peace with imperfection. —Richard Carlson

Each one has to find peace from within, and peace to be real must be unaffected by outside circumstances. —Mahatma Gandhi

3. Direct students to make a peace collage or bulletin board of peace proverbs. They may add their own proverbs to the proverbs listed in the previous activity.

Mediation Scenarios

Directions: Decide who will play each part in the scenario and who will mediate. With the help of the mediator, brainstorm as many solutions to the problem as possible, then negotiate a mutually agreeable resolution.

1. Tom and Fernando found a 100-dollar bill on the curb outside the school. They turned it over to the police. Now 6 months have passed, the loss has been advertised, and nobody has yet claimed the money. The police have returned the money to the boys. Tom claims that he saw it first and picked it up; therefore, he should receive a greater share of it.
2. Kinta is continually borrowing Helen's belongings. Helen claims that Kinta borrowed four brand-new folders, and now Helen wants them back. Kinta refuses, declaring the folders are hers.
3. Georgio is upset because Tony has not repaid the 10 dollars he borrowed a month ago. Tony claims he has no money and cannot pay back Georgio.
4. The basketball team cannot decide on a place and time for practice.
5. Marita accuses the group of leaving her out because of racial differences. She claims that she overheard someone direct a racial slur toward her.
6. The new superintendent is proposing that schools with a high incidence of drug use install metal detectors and smoke alarms in the rest rooms. The teachers and students believe that such actions would cause havoc in the schools.
7. Vito is waiting for a car to pull out of a parking spot in the school parking lot. Before he can enter the vacated spot, a third car (driven by Ron) pulls into it from the opposite direction. Vito is angry, but Ron claims he saw the spot first and refuses to move his car.