



CONSIDERING CONFLICT

Push the boundaries on the definition of conflict



OBJECTIVES

- Students will develop their own idea of conflict
- Students will gain peers' perspective on conflict
- Students will come to consensus on a working definition

MATERIALS

- [Collaborative Definition worksheet](#)
(optional, you can use ruled paper too)

TIME

30 min

LESSON INTRO

People view conflicts in many ways, though often, we tend to think of conflict as something that should be avoided. Conflict is neither positive nor negative by itself. How we choose to respond to conflict makes it positive or negative. While conflict cannot be avoided, harmful responses can.

In this lesson, students will use discussion and a definition-generating activity to push their own ideas and concepts towards a broader idea of conflict.

LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. Explain to students that you are going to share a list of words that could be associated with conflict. Explain that each time you finish the sentence "Conflict makes me think of..." with a new word, they should snap 2x if they think of that word very often; snap 1x if they think of the word sometimes; and stay silent if they do not think of it much at all.
 2. Encourage students to look around the room and listen with each word to be aware of their classmates' responses. Note that there are no right or wrong answers for this activity.
 3. Start each statement round with, "Conflict makes me think of..." and use some or all of the following words to finish each sentence: difference, innocence, hurt, anger, win/lose, decisions, normal, disagreements, guilty, unfair, struggle, right, clash, violence, fighting, people, learning, wrong, war, ideas, agreement, against, separateness, change, avoid, intervene, help.
 4. When you have finished your sentences, ask for volunteers to finish the sentence with their own words.
 5. Briefly discuss the exercise using some or all of the following questions.
 - Which words had the "loudest" reaction, meaning that many of you associate conflict with the word? (write the words on the board)
 - Which words had the "quietest" reaction? (write them on the board)
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- Why do you think these words were either frequently associated or infrequently associated with conflict?
 - How could conflict ever be positive or have a good ending? If so, how?
6. Once the conversation is wrapping up, review some of the big ideas from the discussion. Highlight the differences of ideas, the various experiences that classmates shared, and that students probably heard an idea that was different than their own.
 7. Pass out the Collaborative Definition worksheet.
 8. In section one, ask students to think back over the discussion, and write their own definition of CONFLICT.
 9. As students complete individual definitions, form students into pairs. The pairs should work together to combine and modify their personal definitions into one definition of CONFLICT. Write the new definition in section two of the worksheet.
 10. As pairs finish, group up pairs into small groups of 4. Pairs share their definitions and combine those into a final small group definition. Write the new definition in section three of the worksheet.
 11. Go around the room and have groups read out their definitions.
 12. Compare ideas from each group and open the discussion about how conflict shows up in the class or in student' lives.

VARIATIONS

1. If the group is small enough, continue combining definitions until you have one group definition. Post this for future reference.
2. Instead of reading the sentence stem “Conflict makes me think of...” and showing student agreement through snapping—pass out Post-It notes to students and have them generate their own lists of words that connect to conflict. Assemble all the words and have students sort and look for trends, groupings, and outliers.

FACILITATOR TIPS AND NOTES

1. “Conversations on difficult topics allow us to experience and learn different perspectives. It is, therefore, important for our students to develop the capacity to listen to one another and truly hear what each other has to say. In the process of conversation, disagreement may occur but this provides students with an opportunity to clarify their own perspectives and consider how other people’s views can inform opinions.
Disagreement is natural and should be considered a healthy part of conversation. Learning to manage conflict is often about effectively dealing with disagreement before it escalates to violence.”
-GPC Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators



2. Educators have found that some (older?) groups do not engage with the snapping part of this session. If that is the case for you. Try variation #2.

REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. Journal prompt: What is your own comfortability dealing with conflict? Explain how you've come to this place-- be it past experiences, role models, etc...
 2. Follow this lesson up with another lesson in our series on conflict and communication.
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NOTES

- **Source:** Portions of this lesson are from the *GPC Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators*. Check out their work for a great series of lessons on peacebuilding.
- **Educational Standards:** CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Self Management, CASEL: Social Awareness, CASEL: Relationship Skills, CASEL: Responsible Decision-Making, P21: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, P21: Communication and Collaboration, P21: Flexibility and Adaptability, P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, CCRS:SL3 Evaluate Perspective and Evidence, CCRS:SL4 Present Information, CCRS:SL6 Adapt Speech