



Life's a Playground

November 20, 2017

Students Will Be Able To

- 1. Identify types of interpersonal conflict*
 - 2. Apply strategies for conflict resolution to those conflict types*
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Materials

None, other than preparing an instruction card for each group for Activity 4.

Introduction

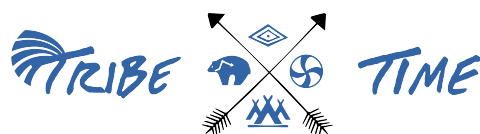
A major part of life – and life in the workplace – is how we deal with conflict. Conflict is basically just when two people disagree or don't get along. This often happens at home with our parents or siblings, at school with our friends or teachers, and eventually at work with our boss or coworkers. In all three locations – home, school, and work – how we respond to conflict can save or ruin relationships.

To simplify the concept of conflict resolution, it helps to picture yourself on a playground. You want to play tag and your friend wants to do tricks on the monkey bars. So who wins? Ultimately, that illustrates the problem. In effective conflict resolution, no one should walk away feeling like they lost or like a loser. We'll come back to this metaphor throughout the activities that follow.

Activity 1 – The Playground

In this activity, students are paired off and each pair is given a playground scenario. The pair is given a few minutes to work it out. Each pair will describe to the class how they worked it out, and the class will identify if there was a winner or loser in the way things worked out. The teacher will present any of the possible conflict resolution methods not covered, and students will then try to resolve the same scenario again using any method they want that will lead to no one losing.

More scenarios will be presented, with increasing difficulty, and the students will have to find a way for the situation to be resolved without anyone feeling like they lost.





Activity 2 – Life’s a Playground

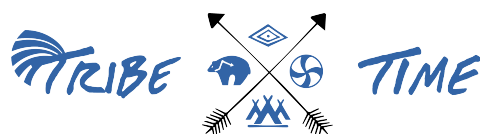
In this activity, you will follow the same process as the previous activity, but with scenarios that come from other places like school, home and work.

Activity 3 – It’s Your Problem

For this activity, kids come up with their own examples of times they’ve experienced conflict and describe how they’ve handled it. The group then talks about how the situation could be handled differently. This can be done as a whole class, or in small groups.

Activity 4 – Making It (Up)

The teacher divides the class into three groups. Each group is given a card with parameters written on it, and the groups then try to achieve their goal without talking to the other groups. The groups have conflicting goals, and the goal is really to get them to throw the rules out the window, talk to each other, and to define what success looks like for them as a group.





Activity 1: What Can You Do

In this activity, students are paired off and each pair is given a playground scenario from the list below, or one you come up with as the teacher. The pair is given a minute or two to work it out in any way they choose – good or bad. It's actually a good thing if a few pairs choose a negative way to work it out so you can discuss options. Each pair will describe to the class how they worked it out, and the class will identify if there was a winner or loser in the way things worked out. The teacher will present any of the possible conflict resolution methods not covered from the list provided, and students will then try to resolve the same scenario again using any method they want that will lead to no one losing.

More scenarios will be presented from the list below, with increasing difficulty, and the students will have to find a way for the situation to be resolved without anyone feeling like they lost.

Level 1: Who's It?

You've been playing tag for about 10 minutes, and one of the two of you is always the first one caught and has thus spent most of the time being it. They're tired and not having fun. They ask if the group can play something else, but everyone else wants to keep playing tag. How could you work it out?

Level 2: Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire

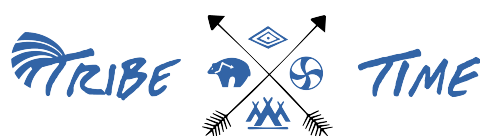
You're playing freeze tag and one of the two of you is it and the other person is frozen. While you're off chasing the other person, the frozen person runs off without being unfrozen and you see them do it. When you confront them about it, they say they were unfrozen by someone else. How do you work it out?

Level 3: Who Dunit?

You are playing in winter on the playground at lunch. You get hit in the back of the head by a snowball and when you reach behind your head, your fingers come away with blood on them. You look around and a group of friends are standing there looking sheepish. You walk over and do what?

Possible Responses to Conflict

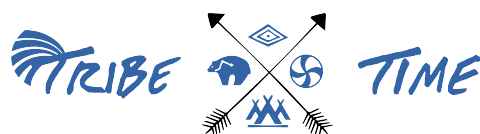
- **Accommodation (Neutral):** One person gives in to another, whether they want to or not. They do this because they believe ending the conflict is more important than winning. This is a positive technique because the conflict is resolved, but the accommodator may eventually become frustrated with "giving in" to every conflict, thus leading to negative outcomes.
- **Avoidance (Negative):** This is most often a negative solution. Both sides avoid the conflict, which can be helpful in minor conflicts. But for an important conflict, this is a negative solution because people try to avoid the issue, even though it won't go away and will eventually grow into a larger problem.
- **Collaboration (Positive):** This strategy involves a group of people working together to reach a solution that meets the needs of everyone involved. It is most useful when





there is a group of people involved in the conflict, when previous attempts to resolve the conflict have failed, or when the conflict is important and must be resolved.

- **Competition (Negative):** This strategy is most often used by a boss or supervisor. They use their power to make a decision when there is an emergency and the conflict must be resolved immediately. This style may be used after other styles have failed. This leads to a negative outcome in conflicts that are not emergencies, because people affected by this decision can have their feelings hurt and become resentful.
- **Compromise (Positive):** This strategy attempts to partially satisfy everyone involved in the conflict. It requires everyone involved to give up something in order for everyone involved to get something they want. This strategy is useful when a deadline is approaching and there is not a clear decision of what is best for everyone.





Activity 2: Life's a Playground

This activity works just like the first activity, but with scenarios from home, work, and school. See the instructions from the previous activity, as well as conflict resolution strategies. Assume for all strategies that you are first trying to work it out with the person directly and not just going above their head.

Home: The Cell Phone

You have a friend who's going through some serious drama with another friend, and you decide to keep texting him/her after 9 pm, the set time for all electronics to be off in the house. At 10 pm, your mother discovers you in your room on your phone and proceeds to have a proverbial cow about it. How do you resolve the conflict?

Home: The Annoying Sibling

You have an older brother who keeps taking over whatever electronic device you are using at the time (Netflix on the TV, Clash of Clans on the iPad, etc.). He has his own phone, although it's not a great one, so you suspect he's doing it just to be mean. You know if you tell your mom, she's going to roll her eyes and take the electronics away from everyone until you can all work it out, which usually just means that once you get them back, you have to give in to him more quietly so they don't get confiscated again. How do you resolve the conflict?

School: The Bully

You keep getting flicked in the ear by a student who sits behind you in Science class. Your teacher says you all need to just grow up and learn to deal with problems yourself, and doesn't seem to think that the ear flicking is a big deal – but you're getting sick of it. Really sick of it. How do you resolve the conflict?

School: The Grade

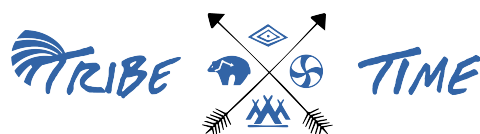
You turn in a paper for English that you've worked on for the last two weeks and your teacher accuses you of plagiarizing. You cited a website as a source, and she thinks your ideas and the ideas on the website are too much the same. You think that you've been open about getting information from the site, and you never use their exact words, so it's no big deal. The paper is a big part of your final grade. How do you resolve the conflict?

Work: The Me Monster

You've been working on a project for work that has taken over a month. It's a group project, and most of your group has been great. However, there's one guy – Jake – who did practically nothing the entire time. He came to the meetings, but mostly just played on his phone or made jokes about things people said. When it comes time to present the project, your boss loves it. He asks the group how they came up with such a great product, and Jake jumps in and takes the credit for the majority of the work. How do you resolve the conflict?

Work: The Pay Raise

It's that time of year, and your boss calls you in for your annual review. You've been working long hours and really going above and beyond to make sure that you qualify for the higher pay raise your boss mentioned a few months ago. However, when your boss tells you that he appreciates all you do, and that you're getting a pay raise, it's not the big pay raise. In fact, you feel mostly insulted that it's so small. How do you resolve the conflict?

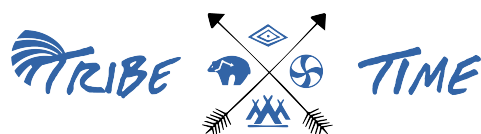




Activity 3: It's Your Problem

For this activity, kids come up with their own examples of times they've experienced conflict and describe how they've handled it. The group then talks about how the situation could be handled differently. This can be done as a whole class, or in small groups.

An important part of this process is pointing out partway through the activity that we often phrase conflict in terms of what other people did wrong. In other words, it's their problem. Try emphasizing that it should be two people working toward a solution together rather than just saying it's the other person's problem. Think of it visually as the problem sitting between you, and the two of you working together to solve the problem.





Activity 4: Making It (Up)

The teacher divides the class into three groups and sets a piece of paper on the floor in the middle of the room. Each group is given a card with parameters written on it, and the groups then try to achieve their goal without talking to the other groups. The groups have conflicting goals, and the goal is really to get them to throw the rules out the window, talk to each other, and to define what success looks like for them as a group.

Group 1: Your goal is to get the entire class to walk around the room clockwise three times and then slap their hand on the paper. If you do this, you've succeeded.

Group 2: Your goal is to get the entire class to walk around the room counterclockwise three times and then sit down once on the paper. If you do this, you've succeeded.

Group 3: Your goal is to get the entire class to touch all four walls of the room and then kiss the paper in the middle. If you do this, you've succeeded.

