

Grade 5

Health Objective 3.02

Create and demonstrate methods for resolving conflict without violence or avoidance.

Language arts objective: 4.09

Produce work that follows the conventions of particular genres (e.g., essay, feature story, business letter).

Materials Needed:

Index cards

Focus:

Give each student an index card and ask them to describe one hurtful incident that has happened to them. To make sure students in the class don't recognize themselves in the descriptions, tell students to try to keep the descriptions as general as possible. For example, instead of writing, "I was very hurt when I wasn't invited to the Valentine's Day party," have them write, "I felt very hurt when I was not invited to a party with many of my friends." Make sure that students do *not* put their names on their index cards.

Collect the index cards and read through the examples. While there will be much variation in the examples given, the types of behavior that students write about will probably include the following:

- a. Verbal harassment, such as name-calling regarding a physical attribute (size, weight, wearing glasses) or taunting about a particular behavior (doesn't like sports or the perceived "teacher's pet")
- b. Gossip, such as spreading rumors about a person
- c. Exclusion from a desirable party, group, or activity
- d. Unwanted physical contact

There may be examples that do not fit into these categories. Set them aside and see if there is a common thread among them.

Teacher Input:

1. Ask students for their associations with the word "conflict."
2. Record their ideas on the board using a web format.
3. Write the word "conflict" in the center of the board or chart paper and circle it. The words students associate with conflict are written at the end of lines radiating from the circle. Related ideas can be grouped together.
4. Discuss the web by asking:
 - a. What do you notice about the web?
 - b. Are there any generalizations we might make about our associations with the word conflict?
 - c. Why are most of our associations with conflict negative?
 - d. What are some examples of conflicts?

5. Explain that many people equate conflict with violence. (You may want to write "Conflict = Violence" on the board to make this point.)
6. Ask students: What is the difference between conflict and violence? (When a distinction has been made, you can change the equation on the board to "Conflict does not equal Violence.")
7. Point out that violence and conflict are not the same thing because most conflicts do not lead to violence.
8. Erase the words from the board and ask students to brainstorm a list of things that are positive about conflict.
9. Some examples of positive aspects of conflict are:
 - a. It can be exciting.
 - b. It can shape our thinking so that we have new ideas.
 - c. Sometimes it can bring us closer to another person once we've worked it out.
10. Explain that conflict is a part of life and that we all experience conflicts at home, at work, in school, and on the street. In fact, conflict is often beneficial. Having conflicts with other people may be uncomfortable, but trying to solve them can shake up our thinking and often leads to new ways of looking at things.

Practice & Assessment:

Using the brainstorming list from the focus activity, divide the students into four groups. Have each group focus on one category described in step 2: verbal harassment, gossip, exclusion, or unwanted physical contact. If possible, give each group examples of behavior from those on the index cards. If there are no examples for a category, help students think of specific examples. Ask students to brainstorm strategies that they might use to deal with these situations.

Tell each group that they are now reporters and have been asked to write a feature story for the school newspaper about their particular category of conflict and describe various ways to resolve conflicts without violence or avoidance.

