

CONFLICT MEDIATION 101



CONFLICT IS THE DRAMA OF LIFE

OUR ROLES AS ITS PLAYERS REQUIRE
PRACTICE AND REHEARSAL. BREAK A LEG!

Conflict mediation is about how we negotiate with others in the delicate, ever changing balance between individuals, the individual and the group, or among groups. Conflict mediation involves learning skills and techniques to improve understanding, respect and communication, to create better relationships and make decisions that are the most fair, and an experience that is optimal for all concerned.

The reason this workshop is not called Conflict Resolution is because not all conflicts can be resolved. Sometimes there is no solution that can be found, but we can mediate, that is work on better understanding, more respectful communication, and to promote and build upon areas of agreement.

Peace is not necessarily the absence of conflict, but rather can be a style of conflict mediation that uses constructive language and behavior to create solutions rather than attack or destroy.

The best language of conflict meditation is non-judgmental. It uses 'I' statements and describes, rather than evaluates. For example, if you don't want someone to step on your toes, you ask them to "Please be careful," rather than to "Stop It!". It is constructive rather than destructive.

Words to avoid: Should, Ought, Can't, Must and Have To. Useful and constructive phrasing examples are: "I would like," "When you do _____ I feel _____," "The way I've always done this is _____", "I respect you and want to work this out."

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Tips For Keeping The Peace



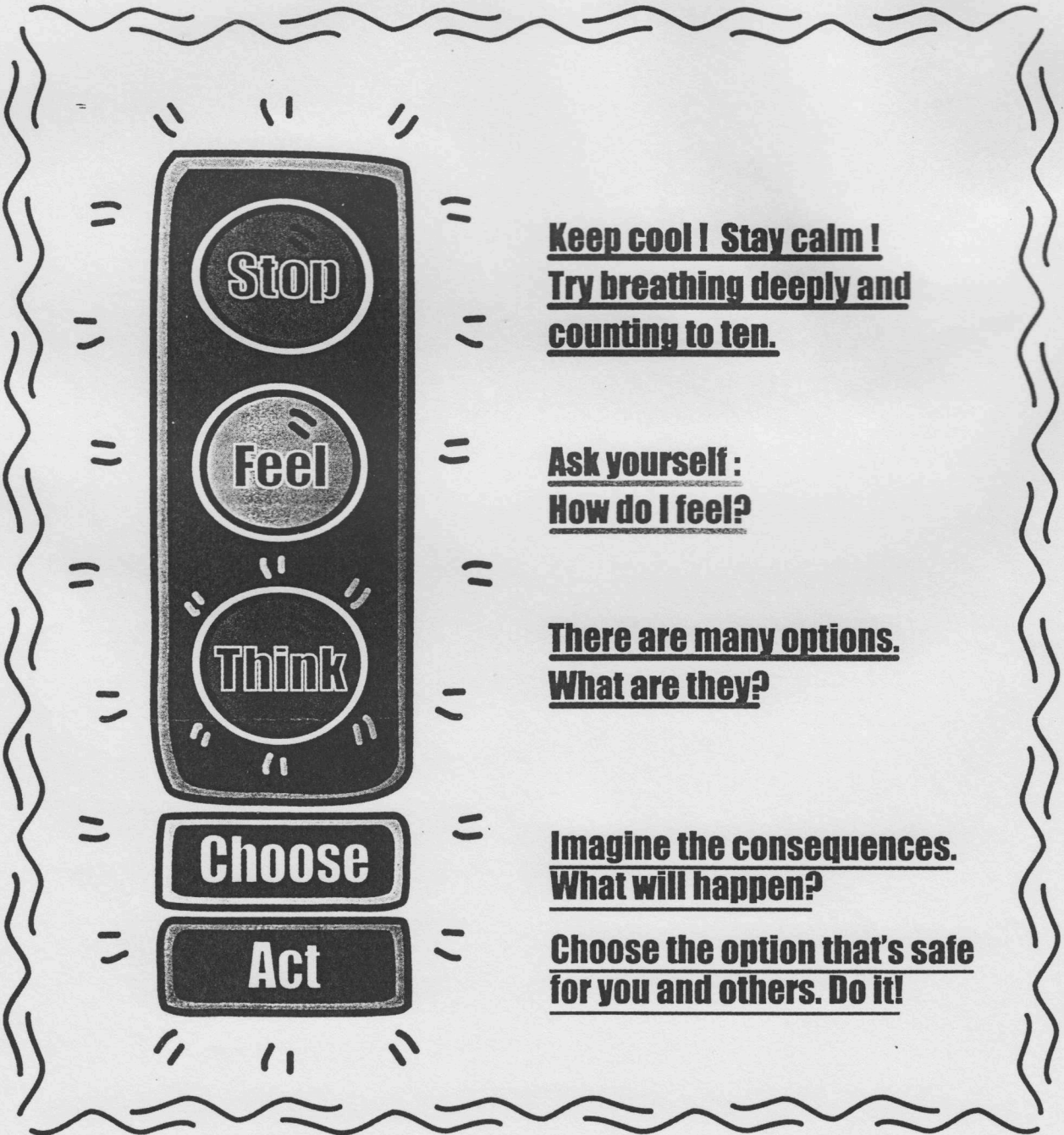
Written by Tom Roderick, Executive Director of Educators for Social Responsibility Metro

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1. **Slow down the action.** Many fights and arguments get out of control very fast. Before reacting, take a deep breath, count to 10 to buy time to think. If possible, find a way to excuse yourself from the situation for a moment so that you can collect yourself.
2. **Listen well.** Don't interrupt. Hear the other person out. Making eye contact, nodding, and saying "uh-huh" are ways to show you are listening. It helps to paraphrase or state in your own words what you hear the other person saying.
3. **Give the other person the benefit of the doubt.** In a conflict between two people, each person has feelings, each person has a point of view. You may not agree with the other person, but try to understand where s/he is coming from. Ask open-ended questions to get information about how the other person sees things. Try to listen with an open mind. If you see that you have done something wrong, don't hesitate to apologize.
4. **Acknowledge the other person's feelings.** When people believe they've been listened to, they generally become less angry and more open to listening to what the other person has to say. Statements like "I can see you're angry" or "You really feel strongly about this" tend to diffuse the anger and open up communication.
5. **Be strong without being mean.** Express your needs and your point of view forcefully, but without "dissing" or putting the other person down. Use "I-messages" to communicate how you are feeling rather than "You-messages" that put the blame on the other person. Name-calling, blaming, bossing and threatening tend to block communication and escalate conflict.
6. **Try to see a conflict as a problem to be solved,** rather than a contest to be won. Attack the problem, not the other person. Try to get away from fighting over who's right and who's wrong. Ask instead: What do I need? What does the other person feel they need? Is there a way we can both get what we want?
7. **Set your sights on a "win-win" solution.** In a win-win solution, both parties get what they want and come away happy. This requires good listening on both sides and creative thinking. If a win-win solution is not possible, you may have to settle for a compromise, where each person gets something and gives up something. A compromise is a lot better than violence.
8. **If you don't seem to be getting anywhere in solving a conflict, ask for help.** Of course, you'll need agreement from the other person that help is needed and you'll have to agree on who the third party should be. But a third party can be helpful. Try to find someone who is a

PEACE SIGNS

STOPLIGHT



HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS

Community Boards has trained San Franciscans to help their neighbors resolve disputes since 1977. We have learned a lot about conflict resolution, and we think these suggestions can help you communicate better when you are trying to solve a problem.

1. Talk directly: Assuming that there is no threat of physical violence, talk directly to the person with whom you have the problem. Direct conversation is much more effective than sending a letter, banging on the wall, throwing a rock, or complaining to everyone else.

2. Choose a good time: Plan to talk to the other person at the right time and allow yourselves enough time for a thorough discussion. Don't start talking about the conflict just as the other person is leaving for work, after you have had a terrible day, or right before you have to make dinner. Try to talk in a quiet place where you can both be comfortable and undisturbed for as long as the discussion takes.

3. Plan ahead: Think out what you want to say ahead of time. State clearly what the problem is and how it affects you.

4. Don't blame or namecall: Antagonizing the other person only makes it harder for him or her to hear you. Don't blame the other person for everything or begin the conversation with your opinion of what should be done.

5. Give information: Don't interpret the other person's behavior: "You are blocking my driveway on purpose just to make me mad!" Instead, give information about your own feelings: "When your car blocks my driveway, I get angry because I can't get to work on time."

6. Listen: Give the other person a chance to tell his or her side of the conflict completely. Relax and listen; try to learn how the other person feels.

7. Show that you are listening: Although you may not agree with what is being said, tell the other person that you hear him or her and are glad that you are discussing the problem together.

8. Talk it all through: Once you start, get all of the issues and feelings out into the open. Don't leave out the part that seems too "difficult" to discuss or too "insignificant" to be important. Your solution will work best if all issues are discussed thoroughly.

9. Work on a solution: When you have reached this point in the discussion, start working on a solution. Two or more people cooperating are much more effective than one person telling another to change. Be specific: "I will turn my music off at midnight" is better than a vague, "I won't play loud music anymore."

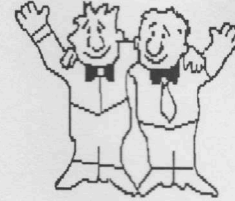
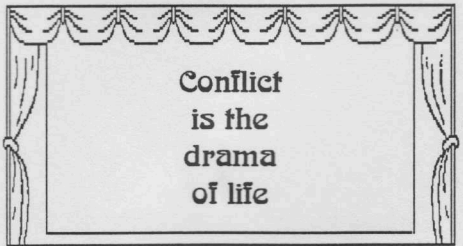
10. Follow through: Agree to check with each other at specific times to make sure that the agreement is still working.... then really do it!

CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

What is Conflict Resolution? Defining our terms.

Conflict: Competitive, incompatible, and/or divergent ideas and pursuits; the opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action in a drama or fiction.

Resolution: A solution that is agreeable to all that brings an end to a particular conflict.

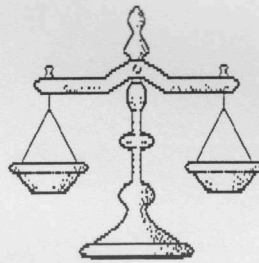


Children want to get along

Why do Conflict Resolution? The benefits of using Conflict Resolution are great, the costs of not doing it enormous.

long-Term Benefits

- ★ Increased self-esteem and independence.
- ★ An environment with less stress and fewer fights that is more conducive to learning and working.
- ★ Children learn how to get along with others and solve their own problems, freeing the teacher from playing the role of referee.
- ★ Better understanding of others.
- ★ More enthusiasm, fun, and harmony, which makes for increased productivity and learning.



long-Term Costs

- ★ Increased absenteeism and physical health problems.
- ★ Wasted time because the conflict keeps coming up.
- ★ Reduced quality of learning and reduced productivity.
- ★ Increased apathy and lowered motivation.
- ★ Performance problems that undermine academic achievement.
- ★ A more stressful environment in which the teacher is called on to settle conflicts instead of teaching.

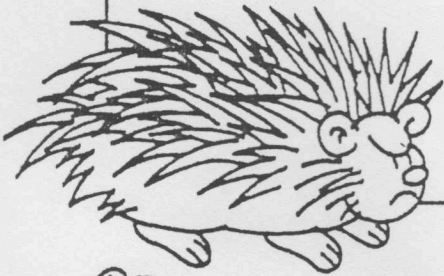
Continuum of Conflict Resolution Methods

<u>DOMINANCE</u>	<u>MEDIATIVE</u>	<u>COOPERATIVE</u>	<u>PREVENTATIVE</u>
War	Legal system	Consensual	Environmental
Brute force	Defer to authority	Mutual	Communal
Win-lose or Lose-lose	Lose-lose or Win-lose	Win-win but slower	Non-competitive
	Most elementary programs	Arduous	

Roadblocks to Resolving Conflict

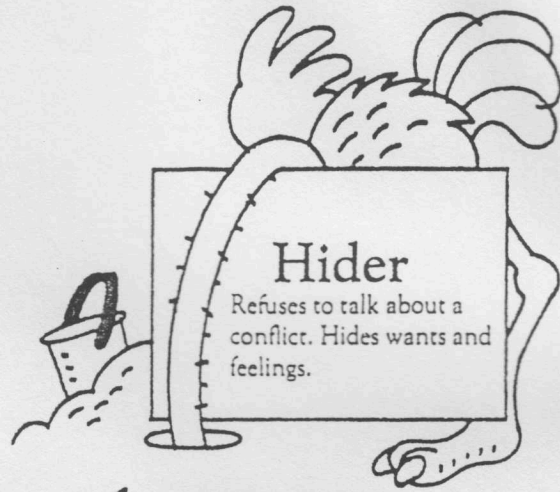
Prickler

Gets angry easily. Yells and calls names.



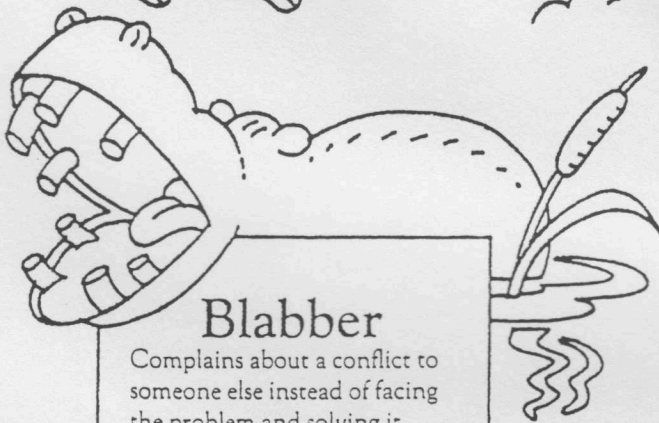
Hider

Refuses to talk about a conflict. Hides wants and feelings.



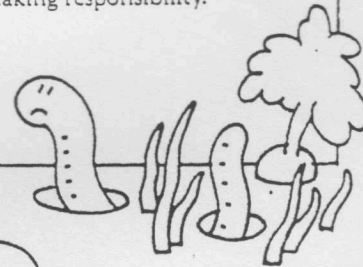
Blabber

Complains about a conflict to someone else instead of facing the problem and solving it with the persons involved.



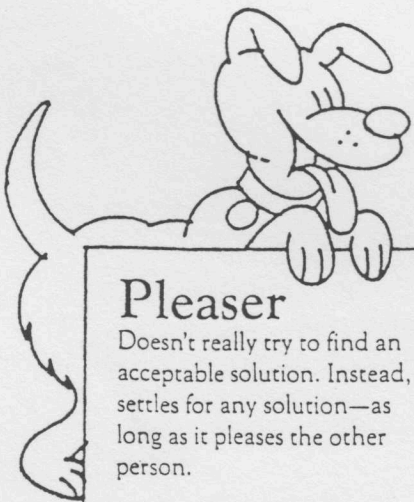
Wormer

Blames others. Worms out of taking responsibility.



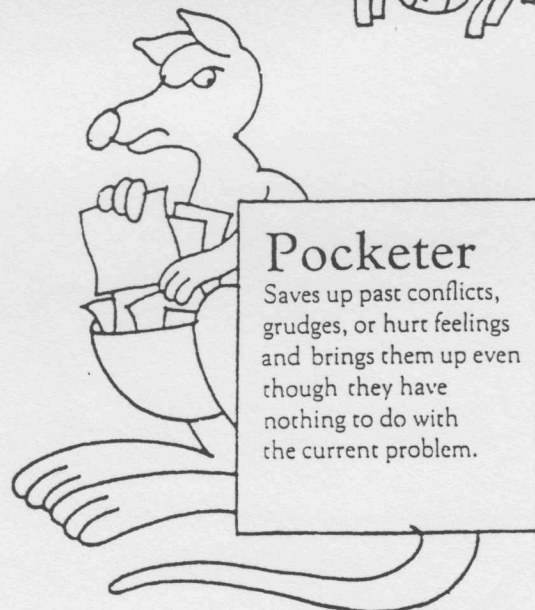
Pleaser

Doesn't really try to find an acceptable solution. Instead, settles for any solution—as long as it pleases the other person.



Pocketer

Saves up past conflicts, grudges, or hurt feelings and brings them up even though they have nothing to do with the current problem.



TYPES	PURPOSE	EXAMPLES
1. CLARIFYING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To get at additional facts. 2. To help him explore all sides of a problem 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Can you clarify this?" 2. "Do you mean this...?" 3. "Is this the problem as you see it now?"
2. RESTATEMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To check our meaning and interpretation with his. 2. To show you are listening and that you understand what he is saying. 3. To encourage him to analyze other aspects of matter being considered and to discuss it with you. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "As I understand it then your plan is..." 2. "This is what you have decided to do and the reasons are..."
3. NEUTRAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To convey that you are interested and listening. 2. To encourage person to continue talking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "I see" 2. "Uh-huh" 3. "That's very interesting" 4. "I understand"
4. REFLECTIVE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To show that you understand how he feels about what he is saying. 2. To help person to evaluate and temper his own feelings as expressed by someone else. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "You feel that..." 2. "It was a shocking thing as you saw it." 3. "You felt you didn't get a fair shake."
5. SUMMARIZING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To bring all the discussion into focus in terms of a summary. 2. To serve as a spring board for further discussion on a new aspect or problem. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "These are the key ideas you have expressed..." 2. "If I understand how you feel about the situation..."

Practice Reframing

Reframe each of the following statements by changing it from a position or personal attack to interest or problem statement.

Wife to Husband:

"I expect you to be home no later than 6 o'clock so we can get to the theater on time."

Father to Son:

"What! You ran my car out of gas again. That's the last time you can use it, so don't ask to borrow it anymore."

Parent to Principal:

"If you were any kind of administrator, you'd fire that teacher."

Union Rep to Principal:

"We're not going to have our people work beyond 3 o'clock until you get the heat on in this building--Period."

Teacher to Principal:

"Don't tell me about budget problems. Your job is to get me a full set of class books."