

Students in Action – Lesson Plan

Preventing Conflicts and Violence— Lesson Plan

Introduction: Daily, young people are caught up in conflicts that they don't know how to deal with. Whether it be teasing in the shower, insults, the pressure to act in a particular way, jealousy... these are just a few examples of problems that students live with every day. Although physical aggression and intimidation are often the first responses to such situations, learning conflict resolution techniques offers an alternative approach. Developing techniques that will bring the parties of a dispute together, providing the skills needed to resolve disputes, and expecting the parties to do so are valuable tools to avoid violence.

Discussion – Although conflict in itself is natural, necessary, and normal, it neither good nor bad. It is how we manage conflict that determines whether it is productive or destructive. When a conflict is handled effectively, it can create a good learning experience; however, if handled ineffectively, conflict can quickly escalate even to physical and emotional violence. Every conflict involves not only the problem, but also those differing points of view of each participant. Each participant has his/her perception of what is true, what is false, and to what degree these facts are important. Communication between parties impacts the status of a conflict. When what one intends to say is misunderstood or misinterpreted by others, this impacts each party's difference of opinion during the conflict. Conflict resolution is based on a structured problem-solving process in which the parties in the dispute express their points of view, voice one's interests, and find mutually acceptable solutions. By learning the steps to address conflict management, the potential for situations to become violent is drastically reduced. Every individual has the ability to choose his/her conflict management style when confronted with difficult situations.

Questions: Do you agree or disagree:

1. When you get into a conflict with someone, it's okay to hit and call names.
2. Do the conflicts here at school sometimes get violent? Why? Are these things really worth getting violent over? Is it okay to get violent? What's bad about violence?
3. Have you ever said something in the heat of an argument that you regretted later? What happened?
4. When is it okay to hit another person?

Activity: Define what constitutes violence by discussing each item on the following list. Is this violence? Why or why not? Can you think of a case where this might or might not be a violent act?

- A big kid keeps a smaller kid from getting into the lunchroom by physically blocking the entrance.
- Shoving somebody out of your way in the hallway.
- Spitting at somebody
- Beating somebody up.
- Threatening to beat somebody up.

Conclusion: Conflict is a normal part of life. We all have occasional conflicts, even with people we love. But we shouldn't let little conflicts turn into big fights, especially violent ones. Here are some rules for keeping conflicts from getting out of control. Tell the other person what's bothering you - but do it nicely. Don't let your emotions take control. Listen to the other person. Try to understand how the other person is feeling. No name-calling or insults. No hitting. Don't yell or raise your voice. Look for a compromise