

# Conflict Resolution Activities for Middle School Skill-Building

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# What is CRAMMS?

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Conflict Resolution Activities for Middle School Skill-Building (CRAMSS) is an online repository of conflict resolution education exercises designed to engage middle school students in the fun, collaborative learning of appropriate conflict management and problem solving. Conflict resolution education (CRE) programs strive to impart students with nonviolent conflict resolution skills and opportunities for emotional growth and self-definition. With these, students form safer learning environments and are better prepared to peacefully enter a multicultural world. This repository is intended to aid conflict educators in the achievement of these goals. While by no means a standalone program, these activities align with and are meant to supplement existing CRE curriculums.

Together, the compiled activities cover four fundamental areas of conflict education: Building a Safe Learning Environment, Understanding Conflict, Emotional Awareness and Communication, and Mediation and Negotiation Skills. They address a variety of competencies including: emotional vocabulary building, empathy building, active listening, I-messaging, stereotype checks, interest identification, reframing and paraphrasing.

Each activity contains a description of its intended learning objectives, directions for running the activity, discussion questions for debrief and reproducible handouts (when applicable). Their content is informed by both the recurring concepts in prominent CRE programs nationwide and the author's own experience as a conflict educator. While their process design conforms to fundamental principles of middle school pedagogy. Seeking to stretch students' bodies and minds in the meaningful exploration of conflict, CRAMMS activities should integrate easily into CRE lesson plans.

# Tips for Using CRAMSS

## Voluntary Participation

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- ★ All CRAMSS activities should be presented as voluntary. Students should not feel obligated to share personal or potentially vulnerable information. To reflect this voluntary nature, all CRAMSS directions are formulated as requests: “Ask students to form a circle; Ask students to share; etc.” Instructors are encouraged honor the entreating, rather than directive, quality of these of activities. In this way, the exercises become joint endeavors in the place of compulsory assignments.
- ★ Students should be given the option to observe the exercise or “pass” on their turn. Observation need not be a passive action. Students who wish to observe can provide valuable feedback to peers, and should be invited to join activity debriefs and to offer their insights.

## Brainstorms and Idea Gathering

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- ★ During brainstorms, it is helpful to separate option generation from option evaluation, an approach that (not coincidentally) is often found in mediation and negotiation practices. This technique acknowledges all student suggestions, giving them equal consideration (and a place on the board) before ideas are evaluated in a structured, collaborative manner. When appropriate, CRAMSS activities list option generation (in the form of brainstorms) and option evaluation as separate, sequential steps to reflect this approach.

## Discussion and Debrief

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- ★ Instructors are encouraged to foster discussions' organic direction, allowing students explore those questions most pertinent to them. CRAMSS activities are meant to trigger curiosity, and debriefs offers students a platform to voice theirs. The teacher's role as a facilitator should be to expand on, summarize and validate students' interests. When facilitated properly, post activity discussions will be mostly student driven.
- ★ During discussion, instructors should make space for, and validate, all student contributions. Rather than distinguishing between right and wrong responses, teachers are encouraged to help students recognize when their statements are facts and when they are opinions.

# Building a Safe Environment

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Middle school is a transitional period for students. They find themselves with greater autonomy, mobility and self-awareness along with many questions surrounding how to manage these new responsibilities. Because of this, it is crucial that middle school educators *and educational materials* work to orient students with their learning environments, making them more comfortable with each other and their teachers. Students learn, and contribute to others' learning, best when unencumbered by fear of ridicule or being out performed. Physical, emotional and cognitive safety are all vital to middle school classrooms, and especially in CRE classrooms where the very subjects at hand are heightened emotions, altercations, biases, difference of opinions and so on. A safe environment is widely acknowledged as perquisite to effective learning, and is consistently reiterated as the first step in the development of conflict resolution education programs.

The activities in this section help build stronger relationships between students, aiming to ameliorate the common discomfort of unfamiliarity. They also support students' in their natural process of identity formation and self-definition, bringing to focus the life experiences and beliefs that make them unique as well as those they share with others. These activities are fun, active and powerful. Ideally, they will help create a safe, comfortable learning space as students come to know each other as resources, cooperative partners and friends.

## Activities

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- ★ Class Agreements
- ★ Chain Links
- ★ Step Circle
- ★ Mail Person
- ★ FriENN Diagram
- ★ Number Line

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# CLASS AGREEMENTS

Discussing conflict can be hard. It requires trust, acceptance, respect and a perception of safety. Most students know they're expected to treat one another respectfully, but are not always sure, or perhaps haven't been asked to consider, what respectful treatment looks like specifically. Indeed, it changes context to context, group to group and person to person. Posting a list of jointly created classroom agreements or guidelines can help make this more explicit.

## OBJECTIVES

- Promote a sense of intellectual, emotional and physical safety in the classroom.
- Gain students' buy-in and promote greater participation from all students.
- Smooth and enrich group discussions throughout the course

## DIRECTIONS

1. Brainstorm with your class about behaviors that would make the classroom safe and most conducive to learning. Brainstorm questions might include:
  - When you're sharing an idea, what would you like your classmates to do doing?
  - What would you like your teachers to be doing?
  - What can your peers do to show you respect?
  - What requests do you have of your classmates while in our room?
2. Record a list of ideas on the board. Accept all ideas, initially.
3. Push for specificity. For instance, if students' suggest, "Be respectful," ask them what that looks like.
4. Once everyone's ideas are listed, ask the class if they can all agree to the proposed guidelines. If there's disagreement, ask why. Modify the list until it's agreeable to all.
5. Have your students turn the list into a large poster.
6. Display the poster prominently in the room and refer to it when helpful.

## ALTERNATIVELY

Ask your students to write down a time they remember feeling disrespected or unsafe in a classroom. Ask what behaviors or rules might have prevented that occurrence. Use their responses to spur your brainstorm.

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# CHAIN LINKS

Familiarity is an essential part of feeling safe in any environment. In the classroom, your surroundings are your classmates. When discussing conflicts or other potentially polarizing subjects, it's important to feel comfortable with the people around you.

Many students in the class may know each other or be friends, but others may not. This activity is an easy icebreaker that will help students become more familiar with one another and hopefully feel safer in the classroom.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students become better acquainted and strengthen peer relationships.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Ask the class to stand in the middle of the room. Make enough space for everyone to stand in a circle, but do not form one, yet.
2. Begin the activity by saying your name and a fact about yourself that's important to you. Then make a "link" by placing your hand on your hip and sticking out your elbow.  
*EX: I'm Avery and I am an older brother.*
3. Then, someone from the class will link arms with you, someone who also identifies with the stated fact. S/he will repeat that fact and add another one, making another "link" with his/her opposite arm.  
*EX: I'm Allen and I'm also an older brother. I also belong to a sports team.*
4. Repeat this process until everyone in the group has joined the chain. If someone names a fact that nobody else shares, ask him or her to name a different fact. (Once a student has joined the chain, they may not change places. Only students outside of the chain may form a new link. Finding commonalities may become more difficult as the remaining group dwindles.)
5. Once the whole class has joined the chain, ask the two people at either end of the chain to find a commonality and link arms, creating a closed circle.

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# STEP CIRCLE

Conflicts can be isolating, especially when combined with the transitions and self-consciousness of early adolescence. Often, middle school students feel alone with their lot in life, confident that others will not, or cannot, understand their feelings, thoughts or situations. This activity can help to penetrate that isolated perception and make the classroom a more comfortable place to discuss those issues like emotion, biases and personal points-of-view that are so essential to conflict education and resolution.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students build positive classroom relationships and learn to identify with one another.
- Provide a safe, controlled space for students to express their beliefs and experiences.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Have the class stand in a large circle.
2. Inform the class that this is a completely silent activity, and ask them not to comment, laugh, scoff or indicate during the exercise.
3. Instruct the students to listen to the following statements. Ask them to take one step into the circle if they identify with the statement or feel it applies to their life. Ask them to silently step in, pause for 2 seconds to observe and appreciate others, and then step silently back into the outer circle.
  - Encourage students to interpret the statements however they like, but ask them not to question the statements or seek clarification.
  - Emphasize that stepping in is always voluntary.
4. Read the I-statements aloud one at a time, pausing between each question for step-ins. Use the statements provided and/or develop your own.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How did this activity make you feel? What did it make you think?
- What, if anything, surprised you during this activity?
- What did this activity make you realize about your classmates? What about yourself?

## ALTERNATIVELY

If you feel comfortable, ask the circle to begin generating its own I-statements. Follow the same process, only instead of reading, have students step in, one at a time, while making a personally significant statement.

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## STEP CIRCLE I-STATEMENTS

- I am an artist.
- I like to play sports.
- I am a good student.
- I am male.
- I am female.
- I am a girl.
- I am a boy.
- I identify strongly with one gender.
- I am an only child.
- I am the oldest child in my family.
- I am the youngest child in my family.
- I am a middle child.
- I live with both my parents in the same home.
- I have divorced parents.
- I live with member(s) of my extended family.
- I have never known my mother, father or both.
- I have lost a family member.
- I feel responsible for my brothers and sisters.
- I have very strict parents.
- I was born in the United States.
- I am American.
- English is not my first language.
- I am multi-lingual.
- I have family or friends living in another country.
- I have travelled outside of the country.
- I am or have been part of a majority.
- I am or have been part of a minority.
- I regularly see my culture represented in the media.
- I often see my culture misrepresented in the media.
- I learned or am learning about my peoples' culture, heritage and customs in History or Social Studies.
- I believe I have at some point been treated differently because of my ethnicity.
- I have a disability.
- I think I will go to college.
- I am part of a wealthy family.
- I usually have access to the things I need and want.
- I have lived in the same house my whole life.
- I have moved around a lot.
- I and/or someone I know has been arrested.
- I and/or someone I know has used drugs.
- I have a friend or family member with a mental illness.
- I have a friend or family member with an addiction.
- I sleep as much as I need to most nights.
- I eat as much as I need to most days.
- I sometimes feel depressed.
- I know someone who has attempted suicide.
- I knew someone who completed suicide.
- I have ended friendships.
- I have recently made a new friend.
- I would fight on behalf of a friend.
- I sometimes feel anxious and cannot explain why.
- I have been bullied.
- I have bullied someone else.
- I or someone I know identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.
- I expect a lot from myself.
- I am religious.
- I am popular.
- I am political.

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# MAIL PERSON

Many students in the class may already know each other or be friends, and others may not. Mail Person is a fun, physical activity gives students an opportunity to share personal information with one another and discover

commonalities between themselves. This activity is an easy way to build familiarity between students and hopefully make all students feel more comfortable in the classroom. Use Mail Person as an icebreaker or as a constructive way to burn energy.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students become better acquainted and strengthen peer relationships.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Arrange seats in a large circle. There should be one fewer chairs than people. Ask one student to begin as the Mail Person and stand in the middle of the circle.
2. The Mail Person initiates the activity by saying, "I'm the Mail Person from (name any place) and I have mail for everyone who (name something true of him or her)," This fact could be a favorite food, a certain life experience, a belief, color of hair, etc.  
*EX: I'm the Mail Person from Brooklyn and I have mail for everyone who celebrates Hanukkah.*
3. All students in the circle for whom this fact is true should quickly get up and move to another, not adjacent, seat. In the style of musical chairs, the student left without a seat stays in the middle and becomes the new Mail Person.
4. Continue play until every student who wants a turn has had one.

## ALTERNATIVELY

The race for a new chair is exciting and competitive. For more collaborative game play, ask all students for whom the fact is true to stand in the middle of the circle and quickly *elect* a new Mail Person together. Ask each group how they made their decision.

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# FRIENN DIAGRAM

We all identify with parts of our personality and cultures. You might identify as an artist or sister or Native American or male. While we may feel an especially strong connection to certain attributes, we're comprised of many. It's important to recognize that others hold different values and identify with different roles. These values may seem foreign, but they're worthy of acknowledgement and respect. This activity will help students express their character, appreciate their uniqueness, and at the same time, consider their commonalities.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students appreciate their classmates' character and cultures and strengthen peer relationships

## DIRECTIONS

1. Pair students and ask them to complete the worksheet "FriENN Diagram."
2. Ask students to generate their own interview questions or use the questions provided below. Their questions and diagrams should reflect the personal qualities that are most important to them.
3. Once completed, ask groups to share their diagrams with the class.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Did you discover anything surprising about your partner? Any interesting similarities or differences?
- Did any pair find NO shared qualities? Can you think of any now?
- Which do you think is more important: our similarities or our differences? Why?

## ALTERNATIVELY

- Ask each pair to partner with another group and compare their diagrams. What connections do you share with the other group? Which connections are unique?
- Create new pairs! Ask students to create "FriENN Diagrams" with 2, 3, 4, or ALL of their classmates.
- Ask students to form groups of three and complete the three set diagram.

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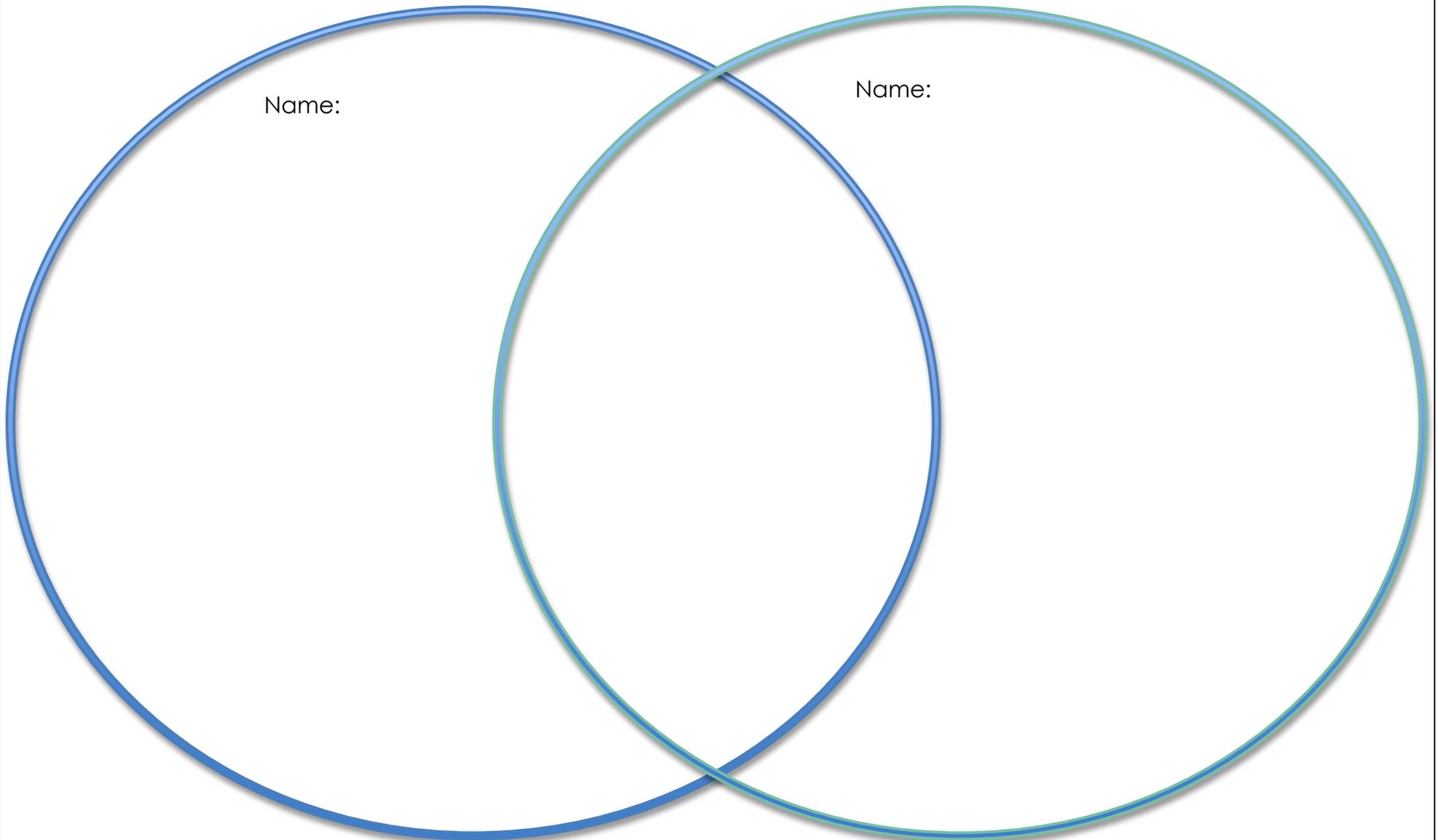
## FRIENN DIAGRAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is your nationality?
- What is your favorite holiday?
- What is your favorite kind of food?
- How many siblings do you have?
- Are you a younger, older, middle or only child?
- Where are you from?
- Where are your parents from?
- What sports do you like to play?
- What is your favorite hobby?
- Are you religious?
- What kind of music do you like?
- Do you have a job?
- Do you come from a large or small family?
- What is your favorite animal?
- Do you have any pets?
- What is your favorite place you've ever been?
- Where do you want to go that you haven't been?
- Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?
- What is your dream car?
- What is your favorite subject in school?
- At which subject do you think you're best?
- What is your least favorite subject?
- Do you play any instruments?
- Do you act?
- Would you call yourself an artist?
- What languages do you speak?
- Where do you go with friends?
- Are you more talkative or quieter or somewhere in between?
- What is your favorite book, show or movie?
- How old are you?
- What do you want to study in college?
- What is your dream job?

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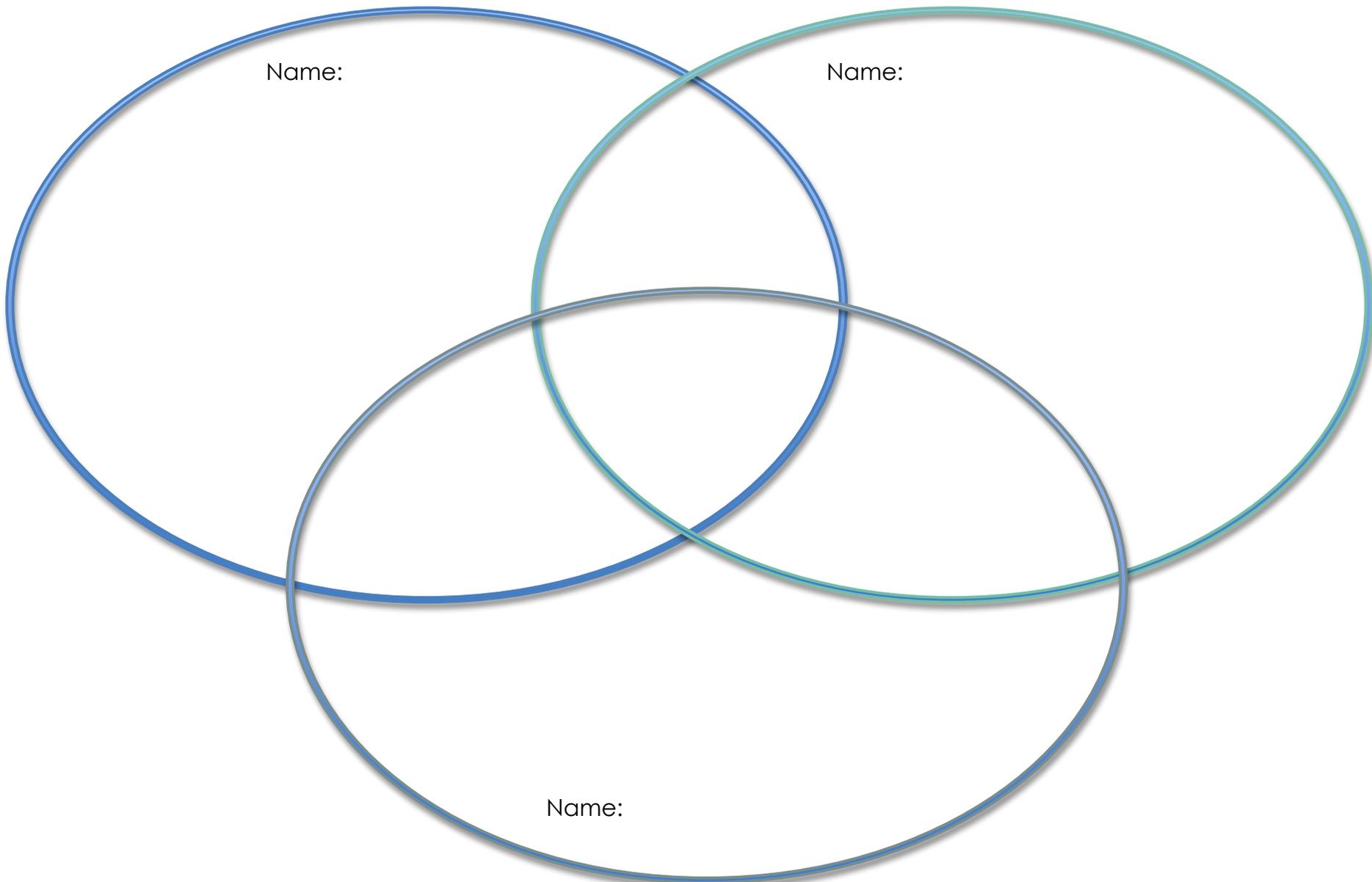
# FRIENN DIAGRAM

**DIRECTIONS:** Take turns interviewing your partner about his/her personality and culture. Write one partner's unique characteristics in left circle and the other's in the right. Write shared traits in the overlapping space. Be sure to cover the personal qualities that are most important to you both! EX: *My nationality is vey important to me. I'm Polish. What's your nationality?*



# FRIENN DIAGRAM

**DIRECTIONS:** Take turns interviewing your partners about their personality and culture. Write one partner's unique characteristics in left oval, one partner's in the right oval and one partner's in the lower oval. Write shared traits in the overlapping spaces. Be sure to cover the personal qualities that are most important to you all! EX: *My nationality is vey important to me. I'm Polish. What are your nationalities?*



# NUMBER LINE

Difference of opinion is a common and exciting part of life. We all have our own ideas and opinions, but we're not always given the chance to describe those ideas or examine where they came from or how they were developed. This activity gives students the opportunity to express their opinions both verbally and visually, as well as listen to and consider other points of view. It also helps illustrate that most issues are not black-and-white, but rather a wide range of grey.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Create a large number line across your classroom wall by posting three signs, reading 0, 50 and 100.
2. Ask your students to stand along the line, in random order at first, and listen to the statements you read.
3. Read prompts aloud to the class. Use the prompts provided or create your own.
4. After each statement, instruct your students to position themselves along the number line according to how much they agree with the statement (0 being not at all). Ask them to pick a specific number.
5. Call on individual students to explain which number they're at and why.
6. Ask the other students to listen carefully, but not to talk or contradict the speakers during their explanations.
7. Instead, if their minds change during a classmate's explanation, ask students to respond by moving silently along the number line.
8. When you see a student make a dramatic move, ask them to reflect on what their classmate said that caused the shift.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students learn to articulate their positions on social issues.
- Students learn to listen to differing opinions considerately.
- Students understand that most issues are not black-or-white, right-or-wrong, but multidimensional and nuanced.

## Discussion Questions

- What new information did you learn about these topics?
- Where do our opinions come from? How are they shaped?
- If someone stands at a different spot along the line, are they wrong?
- How does it feel listening to someone with whom you disagree?

## ALTERNATIVELY

If the line feels too cluttered, have students go up 2, 3 or 4 at a time, and give each group one prompt.

Leave the number line up all year! Use it to poll the class, or for structure when debate arise between students.

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# NUMBER LINE PROMPTS

- Profanity should be allowed in schools.
- The drinking age should be lowered to 18.
- Marijuana should be legalized.
- Assisted suicide should be allowed.
- There are some things worth killing for.
- The President is doing a good job.
- Dogs are better pets than cats.
- Abortions should be legal in all states.
- Gay marriage should be legal in all states.
- Boys are better at sports than girls.
- Everyone should go to college.
- All problems can be solved with enough money.
- Religion is an important part of life.
- It is wrong to eat animals.
- There's no better place to live than the United States.
- Videogames are an unhealthy influence.
- New technology almost always improves quality of life.
- Regular citizens should be allowed to carry guns.
- Fist fighting should only ever be a last resort.
- It's important to have neat handwriting.
- Grades are an accurate measure of intelligence.
- Sometimes it is OK to lie.
- Sticks and stones really do hurt more than words.
- It's good that we have nuclear weapons.
- Texting is preferable to talking on the phone.
- The type of clothes you wear matters.
- Men and women are fundamentally different.
- We should all be worried about climate change.

# Understanding Conflict

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Too often, conflicts carry a negative connotation in the minds of young people. They are thought of as undesirable and primarily associated with anger, sadness and violence. Conflict resolution education programs adamantly stress the need to reverse this thinking. Students should understand conflicts as having positive possibilities and as a necessary, natural part of life. When handled appropriately, conflicts are opportunities to make something better. They challenge us to learn, grow and create. Unfortunately, negative perceptions of conflict pervade largely because of the poor ways in which people choose to respond to it. It is important that students understand that there are a variety of options when it comes to handling conflict and that their reaction in conflict situations can greatly influence the quality of outcome.

The activities in this section expose students to different types of conflicts and conflict sources. They ask students to develop constructive approaches to conflict resolution and consider how those approaches differ from destructive ones. Students will also be exposed to traditional conflict management styles and asked to think within these frameworks. Together, these activities work to portray conflicts as potentially positive phenomenon, because when viewed as such, conflicts become an opportunity for growth, inspiring those with the appropriate skills to cooperate in their resolution.

## Activities

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- ★ Conflict Response Ts
- ★ Constructive v. Destructive Responses (handout)
- ★ Conflict Response Cycle
- ★ Conflict Style Shuffle
- ★ Apple Arguments
- ★ Picture Types
- ★ Imbalance Challenges

# CONFLICT RESPONSES T<sub>s</sub>

We often think of conflicts as bad or unfortunate, situations to be avoided if possible. Actually, in most cases, conflicts are opportunities to make something better. They challenge us to learn, create and improve. That's why textbooks call them math "problems." Conflicts get their bad rap from the ways in which people *choose to respond* to them. There are always multiple ways to react in conflict situations, some destructive and others constructive. This activity will help students understand that our responses help determine whether conflicts lead to fall out or productive problem solving.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students understand that conflicts are not necessarily negative.
- Students understand how their reactions to conflict help shape its course.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Group students into teams of three.
2. Within their groups, ask students to come up with a conflict. It can be imaginary or a conflict from one of their lives.
3. Ask each group to create a T-chart for its conflict, listing three constructive ways one might respond to that conflict and three destructive ways. Emphasize that **constructive** ways likely lead to learning, problem solving and better relationships, while **destructive** ways will lead to escalation and enmity.
4. Ask each group to share their conflict and T-chart with the class.
5. For every constructive and destructive response shared, ask a listening student provide one possible consequence or outcome.

## EXAMPLE

*My brother always wears my clothes.*

Constructive	Destructive
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ask if he knows which clothes belong to me. Offer to mark my tags.</li><li>2. He seems to like my shorts. Offer to show him where I bought them.</li><li>3. Explain that his wearing my clothes bothers me. See if he has any solutions.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Yell at him or hit him whenever I see him in my clothes.</li><li>2. Wear his clothes without asking, since he's in mine.</li><li>3. Keep all my clothes dirty so he won't want to wear them.</li></ol>

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is challenging about coming up with constructive response when you're actually in a conflict?
- Our T-charts list only constructive and destructive responses to conflict. Are all responses either constructive or destructive, or might your response affect conflict in a different way?

Name:

Date:

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# CONSTRUCTIVE V. DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES

## DIRECTIONS:

**Consider the conflicts below. Think about both a constructive and destructive way to respond to each.**

1. In years past, both the debate team and the Mathlete team received money from the school for materials and to travel to competitions. This year, budget cuts have left less money for student clubs, and the school will only be able to fund one of the teams. You're on the debate team and would hate to see it disappear. You also have many friends who are Mathletes and know they value their club just as much as you value yours.

*How could you respond to this conflict destructively? What consequences might result?*

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*How could you respond to this conflict constructively? What consequences might result?*

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2. This year for Halloween you and two of your friends dressed up as The Three Amigos. You wore sombreros and vests and spoke with a fake accent. During the day you learn that your costume has offended some of your classmates. They feel that your dress and some of your actions are disrespectful to their culture. You don't mean any harm, but you're really proud of your costume and would like to continue wearing it.

*How could you respond to this conflict destructively? What consequences might result?*

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*How could you respond to this conflict constructively? What consequences might result?*

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# CONFLICT RESPONSE CYCLE

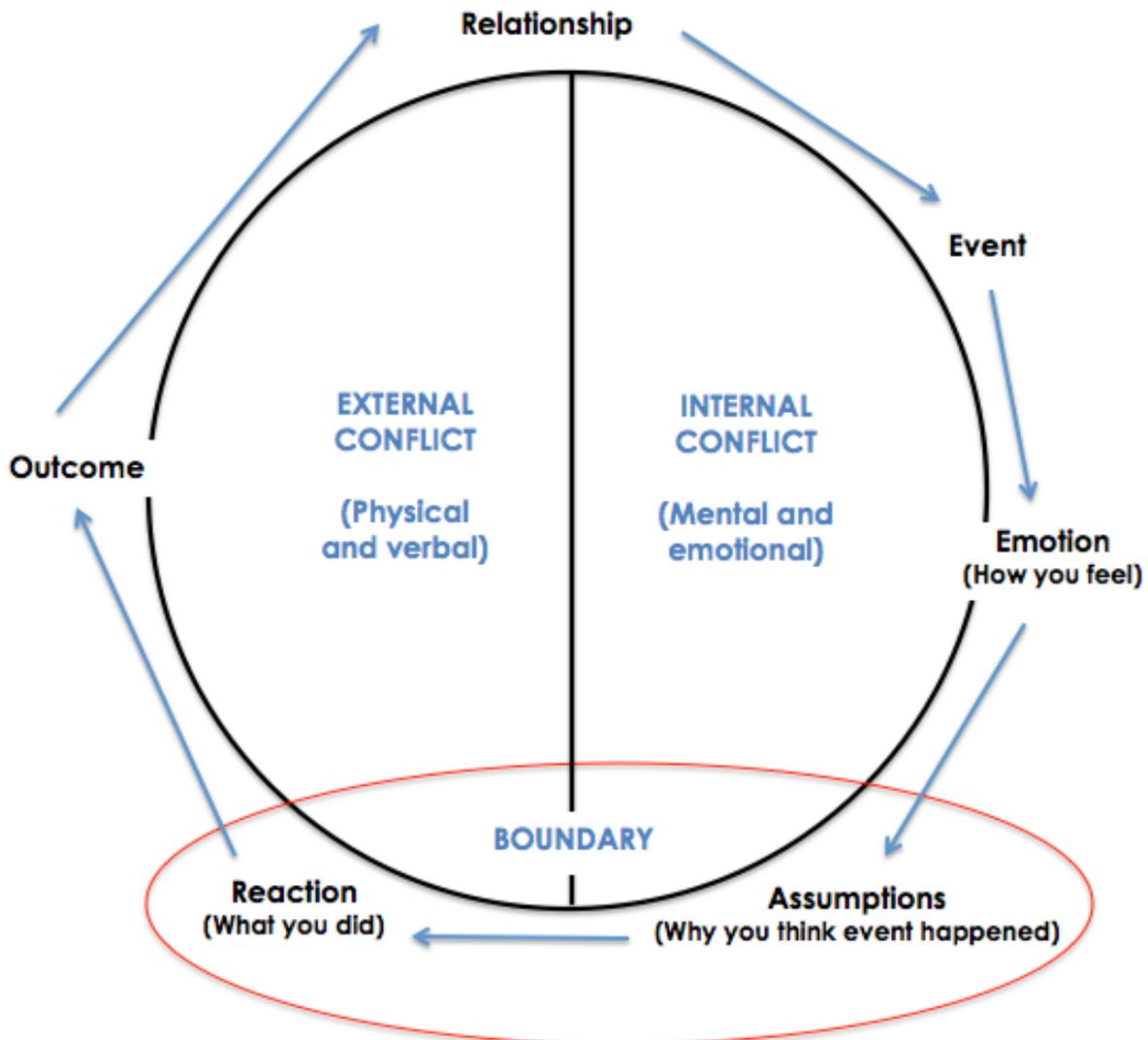
When confronted by things we perceive as offensive or threatening, we react. For the most part these reactions are fast and automatic. We can respond so quickly that we sometimes end up in conflict without realizing how it's happened. This exercise helps students understand the mental process that fuels negative interactions, and, hopefully, use that understanding to respond more productively to upsetting stimuli.

## OBJECTIVE

- Students understand their internal responses to triggers and how they influence external reactions.

## LECTURE TOPIC

Draw and explain the conflict cycle below.



**Relationship:** We each have unique relationships with the things around us that are shaped by our previous interactions. We develop patterns of interaction with nearly everything, classes, foods, groups, and events, however, in conflict we're typically thinking about interactions between individuals. Normal interaction is simply the way usually engage with a particular person or thing.

**EX:** I see Jenna around, but we don't really talk.

**Event:** An event is the trigger or action that is inconsistent with your normal relationship. In conflict, these are negatively perceived interactions. Trigger events have the potential to reshape relationships.

**EX:** Jenna pushed me in the hallway.

**Emotional Response (internal):** Your internal responses are the emotions roused by a trigger.

**EX:** hurt, scared, embarrassed, surprised, angry.

**Assumptions (internal):** At this stage you try to rationalize why the trigger event occurred. Often, we have limited information about the situation, so we rely on intuitions and assumptions. Our interpretation of an event can be very different from another's.

**EX:** Jenna pushed me because she doesn't like me; Jenna pushed me because she's a mean person.

**Boundary:** The boundary is actually a *decision*. It's the decision, not always consciously made, about how to act outwardly in response to the event, your emotions and assumptions.

**EX:** I'm going to push Jenna back; I'm going to just ignore it.

**Reaction (external):** The execution of the decision you made at the boundary. Your external reaction has the potential to majorly improve the situation OR drive it further into conflict.

**EX:** Pushing Jenna.

**Outcome:** The impact your external reaction had on the situation or relationship. Whether the outcome is positive or negative largely depends on how you choose to respond.

**EX:** You and Jenna get into a yelling match in the hallway; You ask Jenna why she pushed you and it turns out she just wasn't watching her step.

**Relationship:** As you return to the top of the cycle, your notion of normal interaction has changed, sometimes drastically. Your new relationship can be much improved OR one in which you're more sensitive to future trigger events and characterized by chronic conflict.

**EX:** Now I avoid Jenna when I see her.

**The red oval is important!** Here is where you have control. You have the opportunity to respond effectively and resolve the problem OR to respond impulsively and escalate the conflict. When you're in the oval, try to break down the process. Check your assumptions. Consider the likely consequences of your reaction. It's hard to do, but immensely useful!

## DIRECTIONS

1. Reconstruct the conflict response cycle in your classroom. Arrange six chairs in a loose circle and assign each chair to a phase in the conflict cycle. Or, label six pieces of paper and tape them to the ground.
2. In pairs, ask students to fill out the provided worksheet, detailing a conflict cycle from one of their lives. If they're uncomfortable sharing a personal story, ask them to invent one.
3. Ask each group to share their cycle. Ask one student to move his/her body from stage to stage as his/her partner narrates the story.
4. Request that the rest of the class to watch silently. Remind them that sharing a personal story requires trust and safety.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think is the most important phase of the cycle and why?
- Why is it helpful to break down the cycle step-by-step?
- Are you currently in any conflicts with sensitive triggers? If so, how might you improve that relationship?

## ALTERNATIVELY

If the full cycle seems too complicated at first, modify it. A simpler version of the cycle could look like this:

**Event** → **Emotion** → **Reaction** → **Outcome**

Once students become comfortable with the concept, you can incorporate additional phases like Assumptions and Relationship impact

After event:

Before event:

Relationship

Internal Conflict

Event

EXTERNAL CONFLICT

(Physical and verbal)

(Mental and emotional)

Emotion  
(How you feel)

Outcome

BOUNDARY

Reaction  
(What you did)

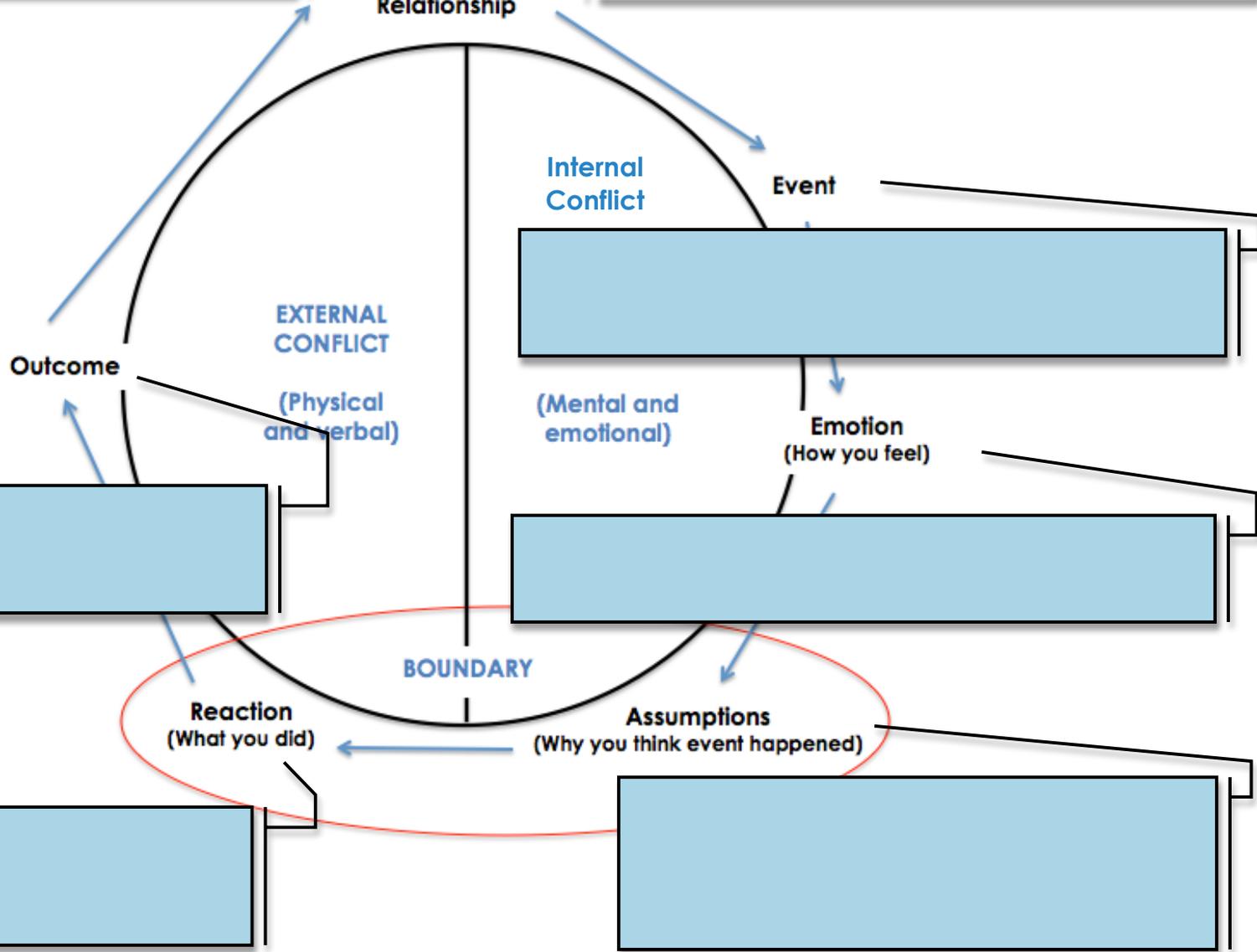
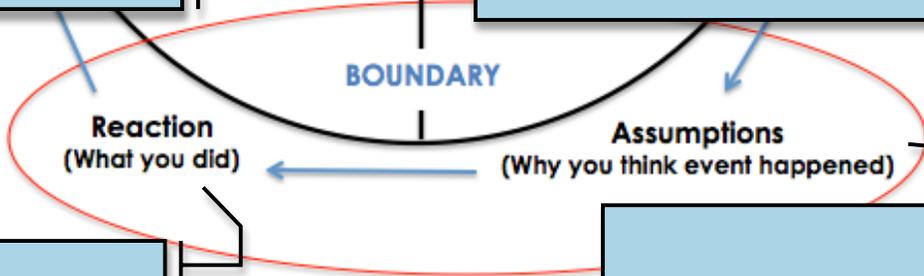
Assumptions  
(Why you think event happened)

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# CONFLICT STYLE SHUFFLE

There are a variety of ways to resolve a problem. The way we approach a conflict depends on our means, beliefs, the importance of the outcome and the importance of our continued relationship to those involved. There are five commonly identified conflict management styles. We may be prone to one, but the style we chose to adopt usually depends on the situation. All styles have an appropriate time and place.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students learn the 5 conflict management styles.
- Students understand the benefits and drawbacks of each style and that circumstance determines a style's appropriateness.

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

**Competition** – Competitors keep their “eye on the prize.” The emphasis is on winning, and if that means others have to lose or a relationship is damaged, so be it. Competition is prevalent in our society, from sports to business to war. Competition usually behooves the more powerful, but is also the style of the determined and the strongly convicted. It is the style used when success is important enough to risk defeat.

**Avoidance** – Sometimes a conflict just isn't worth the trouble of getting involved, no matter the outcome. Perhaps the issue doesn't affect you much, or finding a solution would take time you could better spend elsewhere. Occasionally problems just fizzle, but usually avoidance doesn't resolve conflicts. The problem will persist as is, and maybe that's acceptable. Other times, avoidance may allow the problem to escalate until another style is needed.

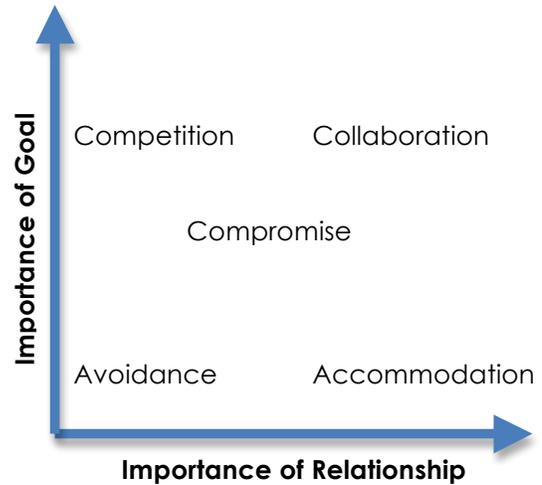
**Accommodation** – When relationships matter more than objectives, you may give up your position to remain on good terms with others involved. If competition is “my way or the highway,” accommodation is “Your way's fine with me, friend.” Maybe you know that the other person feels more strongly about the issue than you do. Or maybe you can't stand the thought of making an enemy. Accommodators appease the other parties, even if that means letting them win.

**Compromise** – Splits and shares, in a compromise no party loses and no party really wins. Usually a compromise involves some appeal to objective fairness like, 50/50, taking turns or “if we can't both have our way, neither of us will.” Compromises allow you to get part of what you want, and usually don't leave relationships any worse off. However, compromises can feel unsatisfying and may replace a more creative, potentially win-win solution.

**Collaboration** – Collaborators place a premium on both their own goals and their relationship with others involved in the conflict. Collaborators seek to create lasting, mutually acceptable resolutions. Collaboration requires time and creativity, but usually results in win-win outcomes.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Explain and discuss the conflict management styles above.
2. Create 5 sections of the classroom, a section for each conflict management style. You might tape 5 signs on the walls or form 5 desk islands.
3. Divide students evenly into each of the 5 Sections, creating 5 groups.
4. Read aloud one of the provided conflict scenarios and give students 3-4 minutes to consider these questions:
  - a. How might someone handle this problem using your section's conflict management style?
  - b. What might be the consequences of handling it this way?
5. Ask each group to share their answers.
6. Ask each group to rotate to the next section and repeat this process. Continue until every group has responded from every section.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which conflict management style do you think you identify with most? Why?
- Which conflict management style did you find it most difficult to adopt? Why?
- Do you think one style is always preferable to the others?
- In what kind of situation might it be best to compete? Avoid? Accommodate?

## ALTERNATIVELY

- As you read aloud the conflict scenario, ask students to stand in the middle of the room. After they've heard the scenario, ask students to move to the section with the style they would adopt in that situation.

---

## CONFLICT SCENARIOS

- Your family just moved into a new house. There are three rooms available for you, your brother and sister, but one is larger than the others and has a bigger closet. Your sister has the most clothes and insists she needs the room. Your brother thinks he should get the room because he's the oldest. You want the extra space for your drum set. It bothered everyone when you practiced in the dining room. Your parents told you to work it out amongst yourselves.
- This month, your school is engaging students in an anti-drug campaign. You and Eduardo have been chosen to create a large banner to be hung in the school's main hallway. Eduardo wants to draw a series of student portraits, each with their own drug awareness slogan. You don't like drawing and would rather use the banner to explain the school's campaign in large block letters.
- Your best friend Jeremy has been flirting with the girl you like. It bothers you, but it's not particularly surprising. Jeremy flirts with just about every girl in school. However, as Jeremy's friend you know that the girl he really likes is Ashlynn. He's had a crush on her for years. You're deciding how to handle the situation.
- You've recently become friends with Kelsey and sent her a friend request on Facebook. You really like Kelsey in person, but online she's a bit much. She likes and comments on almost everything you post, and some of her comments are inappropriate. You've grown very irritated and you're worried that your parents and other friends will disapprove of what they see on your profile.
- Every summer you work for your grandpa doing odd jobs around his farm. You enjoy the work and really like having extra money for the school year. But this year, your grandpa has also hired his neighbor's son, Curtis, to help out. Slowly, Curtis is taking more and more of your jobs. Some days you arrive and your grandpa has nothing for you to do! You don't know Curtis that well, but feel like you should have first pick of the jobs. You're the grandson, after all!

---

# APPLE ARGUMENTS

Conflicts arise for all sorts of reason in every type of situation. But when you think about it, these reasons separate into a relatively small number of conflict types. Different taxonomies exist, but common categories include, data or communication conflicts, opposed interests, relationship conflicts, structural conflicts and differing beliefs. Distilled even further, all conflicts generally have one of two origins: resources and values. These are the sources that drive conflict. They are intrinsically linked to human needs and satisfaction. Understanding the cause of conflict is a great way to begin resolving it. This activity will help students think about different types of conflict.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students think about different types of conflict origins.
- Students understand how determining the origin of a conflict helps inform approaches to resolution.

**Resource conflicts** involve contention over a limited commodity (land, money, time, materials, labor). Resource conflicts are typically simpler to resolve and commonly settled using: competition, division, sharing, and resource expanding.

**Value conflicts** involve clashes between personal beliefs and usually center around what's right, good or just. Value conflicts are more difficult to resolve because values are intricately tied to individual and cultural identity. Value conflicts are commonly resolved using: education, exposure, interest identification and compromise.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Ask every student to provide an example of a conflict they've been in or heard of. Record examples on the board. (Try to record approx. 20 examples. Individuals in smaller classes may need to provide multiple examples).
2. As a class, ask students to group conflicts that are alike. Which conflicts seem to share similar causes? How would they describe each category? What name would they name each category? Record these categories.
3. Ask students to divide each conflict and conflict category into two super categories: resource conflicts and value conflicts.

## APPLE ARGUMENTS

1. Arrange seats in a large circle around a small table or desk. Put an apple on the table.
2. Cut and hand out an Apple Position to each student. If need be, two students can share a position. Or, you can invent new ones! Ask students to keep their positions secret, at first.

3. Ask two students at a time to come to the table and read or describe their positions to each other and the class.
4. For each pairing, ask the class to consider the following questions:
  - a. What type of conflict has formed, if any? (Which of the class's conflict categories would you place this problem in?) Is this a resource or value conflict?
  - b. What needs are at stake in this conflict?
  - c. Can you think of a win-win solution to this problem?

EX: *You want to eat the apple, but you only like the skin. You usually toss the rest. You want to use the apple to make applesauce.*

  - a. *This is a conflict over resources.*
  - b. *Hunger. Validation. Creativity.*
  - c. *Peel the apple. One can eat the peel and the other can use the flesh for applesauce.*
5. Continue until all students who want a turn have gone.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which conflicts seemed easier to resolve, resource conflicts or value conflicts?
- What would happen if you used the same resolution for all of these conflicts? Say, flip a coin and winner gets the apple? Or, split the apple and give each person half?
- Did this activity help you think of any new conflict categories?

---

# APPLE ARGUMENT POSITIONS

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-----  
You want to eat the apple, but you only like the skin. You usually toss the rest.  
-----

-----  
You're deathly allergic to apples. You cannot touch them or anything they've recently touched.  
-----

-----  
You believe apples are demonic. They should all be burned as soon as possible.  
-----

-----  
You're certain this is the apple that was stolen from your lunchbox earlier, but cannot prove it.  
-----

-----  
You're an apple farmer. You want the seeds to plant in your orchard.  
-----

-----  
You're a hunger activist and think that using the apple or any purpose other than eating is wrong.  
-----

-----  
You want to use the apple to make applesauce.  
-----

-----  
Apples are sacred in your religion. They must not be eaten or otherwise defaced.  
-----

-----  
You want to put the apple in a barrel and go bobbing for apples.  
-----

-----  
You hate apples. You don't like the taste and you don't like the texture. You'll tell anyone who asks.  
-----

-----  
You have Malusdomesticaphobia, the fear of apples, you can't bare to see, be near or even talk about apples.  
-----

-----  
You've just learned how to break an apple in half with your bare hands. You want to prove to everyone that you can do it.  
-----

-----  
You want to cut the apple in half and use it to make painting prints.  
-----

-----  
In your culture, apples are believed to have incredible healing powers, but only if you eat the whole thing, peel, seeds and stem.  
-----

-----  
You want to take pictures of the apple at various stages of decomposition for a science project.  
-----

# PICTURE TYPES

We all make assumptions every day. Assumptions and heuristics are necessary and allow us to act reflexively, create routines and organize and simplify our world. However, when relied on too much assumptions can also cause misunderstandings or lead to generalizations and stereotypes. This activity helps students understand the difference between observation and inference, and become aware of assumptions they may not realize they've made.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Distribute a picture to each student. Use the pictures provided, find your own pictures online, or have your students find their own pictures in magazines, books or online. If using the last option, ask students to find a picture of an interesting person (or people) they do not know.
2. Arrange seats into a circle. Have your students sit with their picture.
3. In go-around fashion, have each student show and describe their picture. In this round, simply ask "How would you describe the person in your picture?" or "Tell us as much as you can about your person."
4. As they're going around, take note of any assumptions your students make. These are any details that cannot be definitively verified by the picture. Listen for statements like, "He's nice/mean" or "She's wealthy" or "He's a bad person."
5. Break for discussion.

## Discussion Questions

- Name specific assumptions you saw made. Ask the student what led him/her to that conclusion.
- What were other assumptions that you heard?
- Did you notice you were making an assumption when, and if, you did?

## OBJECTIVES

- Students learn the difference between observed information and inferred information.
- Students practice objective description.
- Students identify and learn to suspend stereotypes commonly associated with groups of people.

## LECTURE TOPIC

The brain interprets and evaluates stimuli at lightning speed; so fast it's hard to realize when we're making assumptions. The mnemonic **ODIE v. ODIS** breaks down the cognitive process, and can help students consciously avoid evaluative judgments.

**O**bserve – the physical process of sensory stimulation. Ex. Light hitting your eyes, Sound hitting your ears.

**D**escribe – turning the sensory data into characteristics. Ex. Tall, pale, shiny, loud.

**I**nterpret – using a composite of characteristics to arrive at a named category of being. Ex. Tall, older, at the front of the room. "Ah! He must be a teacher."

**E**valuate or **S**uspend – when evaluating we assign our existing values or biases to the named thing. Ex. "He's a teacher. He must be mean." To Suspend is to consciously interrupt this evaluative process and allow new sensory information to replace assumptions.

Remember that these steps happen in our brains almost simultaneously and can be hard to distinguish.

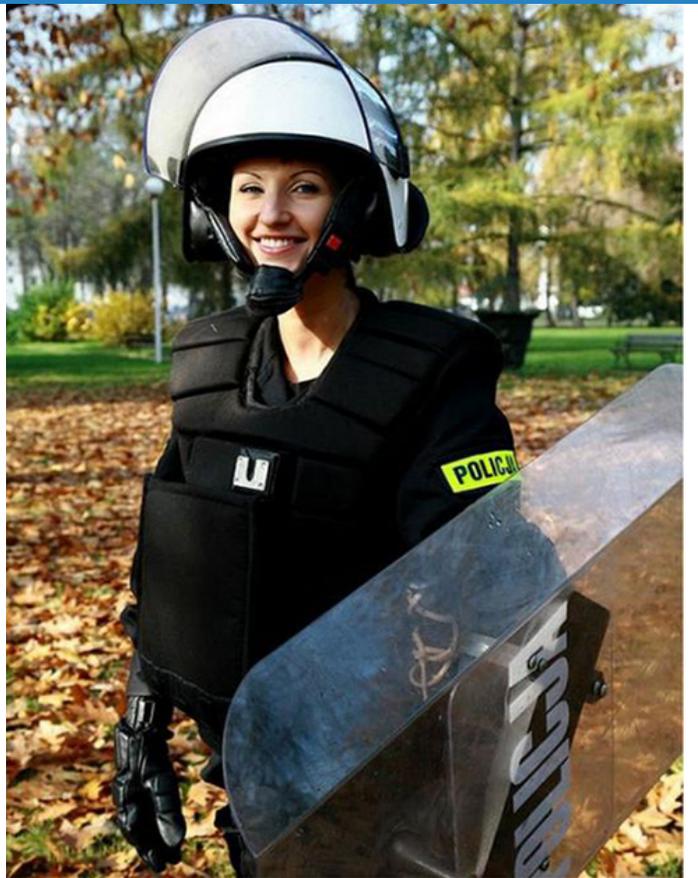
Also, suspension does not mean our values or judgments disappear. That's impossible. Rather, we're reserving those judgments until we have more specific information.

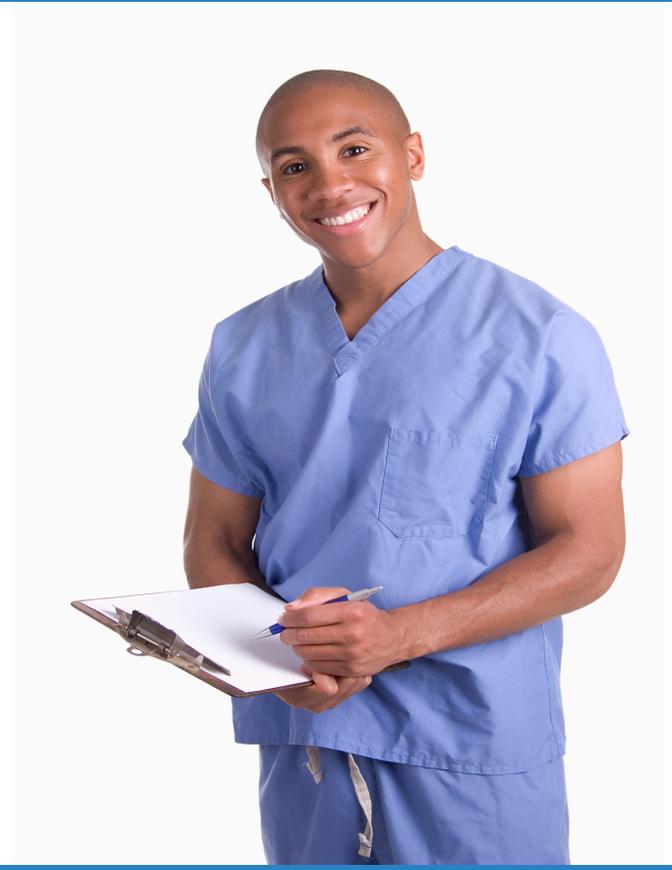
6. Go around a second time. This time, ask the students to practice ODIS and go through only the Observe, Describe and Interpret phases with adding their personal evaluations.
7. Stop a student if you hear him/her making an assumption. Explain why it's an assumption and ask them how they could change their language to be purely observational.
8. Break for discussion.

### Discussion Questions

- What felt different about the second go around?
- Why might it be helpful to suspend our assumptions, especially when in conflict?
- How might the people in these pictures be stereotyped?
- Why is it important to recognize the stereotypes that permeate our world?







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# IMBALANCE CHALLENGES

Conflicts rarely unfold on an equal playing field. Power, one's ability to influence the outcome, is always a factor in conflict, and usually the balance of power is tipped. One disputant may have more smarts, more supporters, more money, more conviction, more physical ability or more verbal ability. Each is a form of power and there are many more. A type of power can be more or less useful depending on the situation. It is important to be aware of the power dynamics at play in conflict (and normally hard not to be). This activity will allow students to experience and appreciate different types of power and how they can influence conflict.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students recognize different types of power.
- Students understand how power imbalances can affect conflicts and competition.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Arrange seats in a large circle.
2. Two at a time, ask students to come into the middle of the circle to compete in an "Imbalance Challenge." Inform the class that in these challenges one student will be put in a position of less power.
3. Ask students in the circle to think about the types of power and power imbalances they see at play before them.
4. Continue challenges until every student who wants a turn has had one.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What types of power imbalances did you see in these challenges?
- What did it feel like participating in a challenge with less power? With more?
- How do you think different types of power factor into real conflicts?
- Can you think of any real-world conflicts in which there is a large power imbalance?
- What can we do to add or detract to our own power? To others' power?

---

# IMBALANCE CHALLENGES

## PHYSICAL POWER

- Two students will have a standing balance challenge. The student who stays balanced longest, wins. However, one student must compete on one leg only.
- Two students will have a book balancing challenge. The student able to balance a book on his/her hand longest wins. However, one student may use his/her palm while the other must use only his/her index finger.
- (Blindfold required) Two students will have a writing challenge. The student who writes, "balance" on the board first wins. However, one student must compete blindfolded.

## POWER IN NUMBERS

- Two students will have a one-leg balancing challenge. The student who stays balanced longest wins. However, one student may choose and use a teammate to help balance (the teammate must not stand on one leg).
- (Requires a small rope) Two students will have a *gentle* tug-o-war challenge. The student who pulls the other student across the circle wins. However, one student may choose a teammate.

## COMMUNICATIVE POWER

- Two students will have a story telling challenge. They must each tell a story about a time they lost their balance. The student who finishes his/her story first wins. However, one student may only speak in words that start with "B."
- Two students will have a listening challenge. Ask students in the circle to randomly whisper the word "balance." The challengers must guess who whispered. The student who guess right first wins. However, one student must play with his/her hands over his/her ears.

## RESOURCE POWER

- Two students will have an object balancing challenge. The student who balances his/her object on end first wins. However, one student's object will be a dry-erase marker and the other's object will be a pencil.

# Emotional Awareness and Communication

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Almost universally, conflict resolution education curriculums underline how important communication skills are to positive conflict management. Miscommunication and lack of communication regularly contribute to the formation and escalation of disputes. In order to effectively address and solve their problems, students must be able to both: listen to understand *and* speak to be understood. With this end in mind, CRAMSS provides activities designed to improve students' ability to identify and convey their desires in a clear, unaggressive manner.

Activities in section cover three primary areas: emotional vocabulary building, active listening and the use I-messages. Students must be able to name their feelings in order to effectively communicate them. So CRAMSS includes activities meant to expand students' vocabulary of emotional words and phrases. Listening activities explore common listening barriers and how to overcome them as well as how true listening differs from simply hearing. Finally, these activities help students make a habit of I-messaging, the popular, non-accusatory means of self-expression. Although simple in theory, they are difficult to recall in the moment. As they sharpen these skills, students will become better equipped to express their needs, respond to others' and reach positive resolution in conflict.

## Activities

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- ★ Wear Your Emotions on Your Wall
- ★ Ang-o-Meters
- ★ Mad Lips
- ★ Classroom Complaint Line
- ★ ReQuests
- ★ Listen "ing"
- ★ Telephone
- ★ When, I Feel, I Need
- ★ You and I-Messages
- ★ I-Interpreter

---

# WEAR YOUR EMOTIONS ON YOUR WALL

Generic feeling words are all too easy to overuse. "Good" is a common favorite. How're you feeling? "Good." How was your test? "Good." What'd you do today? "Good." We all have go-to emotion words like this. They're easy and, after a while, meaningless. Careful identification of your mood and the ability to give words to others' moods is essential to effective communication, especially during conflict. This type of communication requires a broad emotional vocabulary, the kind few of us – and certainly few students – have or remember to use.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students build their emotional vocabulary.
- Students learn to articulate their emotions more accurately.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Lead students in brainstorming as many emotion words as possible.
2. Get past the basics: mad, sad, happy etc. Challenge students to get 50 words. If that comes easy, challenge them to get 75!
3. Open it up all ideas and acknowledge all suggestions. Accept slang and colloquial terms. English or not, this is how students often express themselves.
4. Create a poster displaying all of the words, or have your students create it. If it helps, sort the words into like categories. The four overarching emotional states are glad, sad, mad and scared.
5. Display the poster prominently.
6. In the future, encourage students to be as specific as possible when describing their emotions. Have them refer to the poster when necessary.

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# ANG-O-METERS

Anger is the emotion perhaps most commonly felt when in conflict. And this is understandable. It's upsetting to be opposed; disagreement can be maddening. Angry feelings escalate easily and quickly, and can move from mildly annoyed to furious before you know it. But anger often flares more conflict than it solves. Anger impairs careful decision-making and can lead to rash actions, especially as you near your bursting point. Examining your own escalation processes can help you identify your triggers and, hopefully, interrupt cycles of growing anger.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students build their emotional vocabulary, specifically concerning expressions of anger.
- Students begin to understand how anger escalates and how this process might be checked.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Ask students to complete the "My Ang-O-Meter" handout below.
2. In the left column students should choose five words or terms that describe increasingly intense feelings of anger. In the right column students should supply a real-life example for each word.  
EX: In the dark orange boxes one may write: "When I'm this angry I call it *boiling*. That is how I felt one time when *my brother borrowed my skateboard and broke it.*"
3. Once completed, encourage students to share their Ang-O-Meters with the class.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What anger words did you use and what were your examples?
- When you're angry, is it always clear how angry you are in the moment?
- Have you ever found yourself at the top of your Ang-O-Meter in response to something you now realize was pretty minor? If so, why do you think that happened?

## ALTERNATIVELY

- Ask students to complete the right column using different points of escalation from a single example. For instance, in the green box: *My brother borrowed my skateboard without asking*. In the yellow box: *Then he broke it*. In the light orange box: *He didn't seem sorry about it*, and so on.
- Ask students to think about what parts of the situation caused them to move up the meter, and to consider what could have happened differently to deescalate their anger.

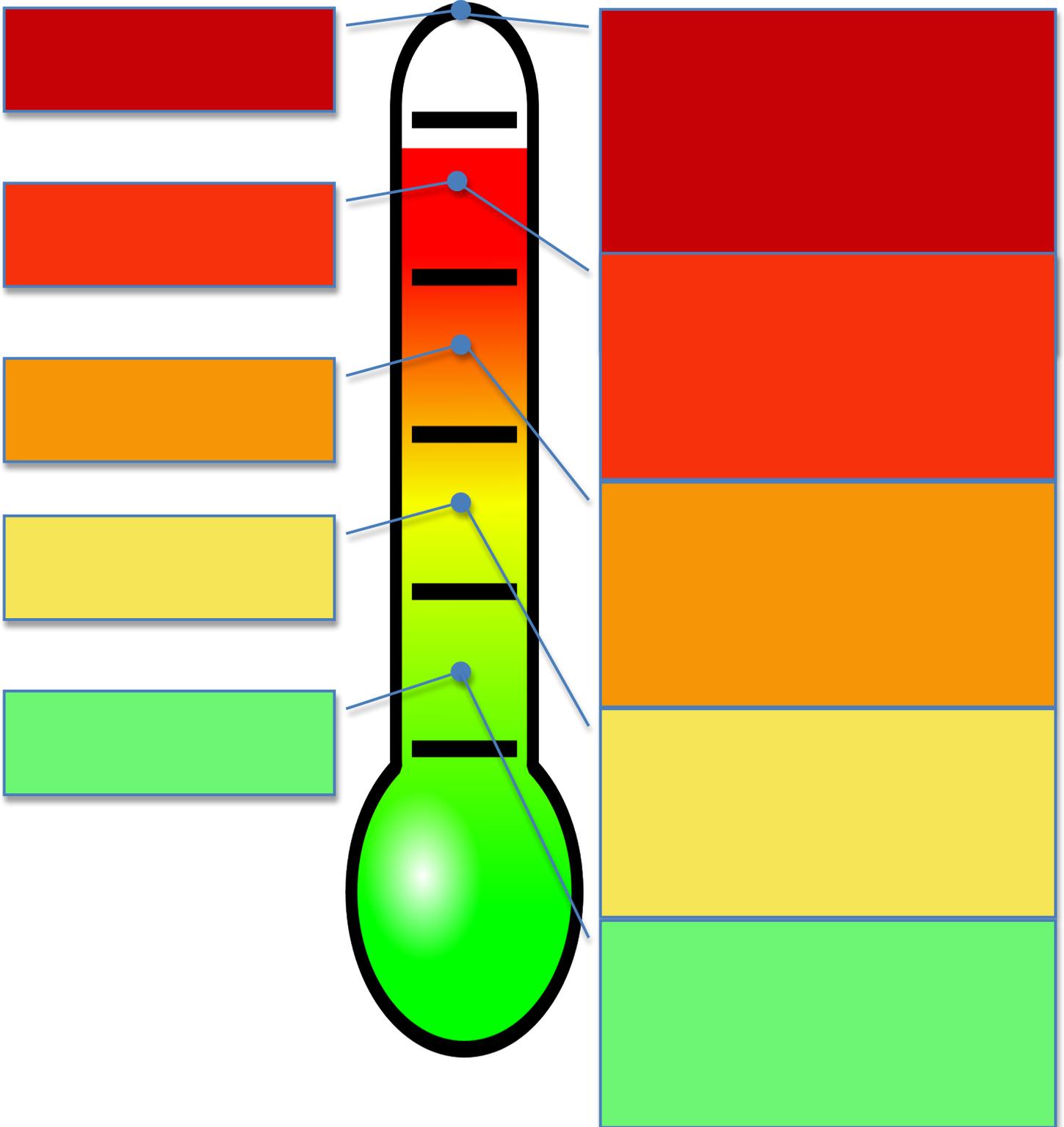
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In your example, how did you react at each level? What did you say? What did you do?
- What could the other person have done to curb your anger? What could you have done?

# My Ang-O-Meter

When I'm this  
angry I call  
it....

That is how I  
felt one time  
when...



---

# MAD LIPS

It's believed that the majority of communication is non-verbal. We rely on gestures, facial expressions and tones to convey those subtle messages we don't speak aloud. But expressions are not always as easy to understand as words. Non-verbal communication is highly subject to our interpretation, and the accuracy of those interpretations is often undependable. This activity allows students to test their own empathic intuitions. And helps illustrate the communicative limitations of non-verbal expression.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students appreciate the limitations of non-verbal communication.
- Students test the accuracy of their empathic intuitions.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Break students into pairs, A and B, and give each pair a copy of the exercise "Map Lips."
2. Give one partner Sheet A and the other partner Sheet B. Ask partners not to share their sheets with one another.
3. Ask partner A to read the first narrative aloud, pausing at each blank.
4. Ask partner B to follow along on his/her sheet. Where partner A's sheet has blanks, partner B's sheet will have bolded emotion words.
5. When partner A gets to a blank, ask partner B to convey the corresponding emotion word using only gestures and facial expressions.
6. Ask partner A to guess the emotion and fill in the blank in his/her narrative. Repeat this throughout the narrative.
7. For the second narrative, ask partners A and B to reverse roles.
8. Once both narratives are filled in, ask partners to share their sheets.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How accurately were you able to read your partners expressions?
- Was it easy to express all of these feelings non-verbally? Do you have distinct expression for each of these emotions?
- Compare your sheets. How much does the meaning of the narratives change from one sheet to the other?
- What does this tell you about your non-verbal interpretations in everyday conversations?

---

# MAD LIPS

# SHEET A

## DIRECTIONS

Partner A will read Narrative One aloud, pausing at each underlined word. All of the underlined words are emotion words. Instead of reading these words aloud, Partner A will try to convey each word using facial expressions or gestures. Partner B will read Partner A's expression, guess the emotion, and fill in the corresponding blank. Reverse roles for Narrative Two.

## NARRATIVE ONE

I had the worst time at school today. I was exhausted because I stayed up late finishing a project for social studies. I overslept and got to school late, so I was already stressed when Mr. Mann announced a pop quiz. It caught me by surprise. I don't think I did well and that's frustrating. Then, in art class, I spilled water all over my painting! I was sad because that was supposed to be my piece for the art show, but I'd be embarrassed to submit it now. Normally I would talk to my friend Antonio about all this but he was absent. It always feels lonely when he's gone. All this to say, I'm happy you picked me up today, mom. When I saw your car I was so relieved. I would've been overwhelmed on the bus.

## NARRATIVE TWO

I'm usually so \_\_\_\_\_ in Mrs. Knolls class. So I was \_\_\_\_\_ today when she gave us a fun assignment. We're supposed to create a short skit about Greek mythology. I'm so \_\_\_\_\_! I don't get \_\_\_\_\_ performing in front of an audience like most people. Maybe I'll play an all-knowing oracle who foretells of betrayal and \_\_\_\_\_. Or maybe I'll be an \_\_\_\_\_ god from Olympus who \_\_\_\_\_ the ungrateful citizens. No matter the role, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I'll steal the show. I just hope the class doesn't get \_\_\_\_\_. Mythology can be tricky with all those long names. It'll be up to me to make the characters entertaining and keep the audience \_\_\_\_\_.

---

# MAD LIPS

# SHEET B

## DIRECTIONS

Partner A will read Narrative One aloud, pausing at each underlined word. All of the underlined words are emotion words. Instead of reading these words aloud, Partner A will try to convey each word using facial expressions or gestures. Partner B will read Partner A's expression, guess the emotion, and fill in the corresponding blank. Reverse roles for Narrative Two.

## NARRATIVE ONE

I had the worst time at school today. I was \_\_\_\_\_ because I stayed up late finishing a project for social studies. I overslept and got to school late, so I was already \_\_\_\_\_ when Mr. Mann announced a pop quiz. It caught me by \_\_\_\_\_. I don't think I did well and that's \_\_\_\_\_. Then, in art class, I spilled water all over my painting! I was \_\_\_\_\_ because that was supposed to be my piece for the art show, but I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ to submit it now. Normally I would talk to my friend Antonio about all this but he was absent. It always feels \_\_\_\_\_ when he's gone. All this to say, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ you picked me up today, mom. When I saw your car I was so \_\_\_\_\_. I would've been just plain \_\_\_\_\_ on the bus.

## NARRATIVE TWO

I'm usually so bored in Mrs. Knolls class. So I was shocked today when she gave us a fun assignment. We're supposed to create a short skit about Greek mythology. I'm so excited! I don't get nervous performing in front of an audience like most people. Maybe I'll play an all-knowing oracle who foretells of betrayal and despair. Or maybe I'll be an angry god from Olympus who scares the ungrateful citizens. No matter the role, I feel confident I'll steal the show. I just hope the class doesn't get confused. Mythology can be tricky with all those long names. It'll be up to me to make the characters entertaining and keep the audience pleased.

---

# CLASSROOM COMPLAINT LINE

It's said that behind every complaint is a request. "I'm so tired of your lies!" can be interpreted as, "Please tell me the truth" or perhaps simply, "Will you stop lying?" It's not always our first instinct to hear the plea within complaining and potentially rude comments. Ideally, we learn to translate our own complaints and pose the request we're really trying to make. Short of this, it's helpful to be able to hear others' appeals, even when they're not stated as such. It's not always best to indulge whining, but reframing grumbles this way can smooth communication and help resolve or even prevent disputes.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students understand that complaints typically carry an implicit request.
- Students will practice interpreting complaints as requests for a specific action.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Seats the class in a large circle.
2. Ask one student to volunteer as the "Classroom Complaint Line" and stand in the middle of the circle.
3. In go around fashion, ask each student in the circle to make a complaint. Complaints should be stated, "Ugh, I'm so..."
4. In response to each complaint, the student in the middle should mime an action that placates the complaint, i.e. satisfy the request that he/she hears in the complaint. After a brief charade, the student should say, "I heard you ask for... So I... Does that help?"  
EX: *Ugh, I'm so hot!*  
*(After pretending to open a window) I heard you ask for some cool air so I opened a window. Does that help?*
5. Let one student respond to 3-4 requests and then ask another volunteer to serve as the "Classroom Complaint Line." Continue until all those who want a turn have had one.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How might understating complaints as requests help in conflict situations?
- Can you think of an example from your own life when a request might have served you better than a complaint?
- Do all complaints imply a request? Can you think of any that do not?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# REQUESTS

## DIRECTIONS

**Read the following complaints. How might you translate them into requests? Name two ways that each request could be satisfied. Be creative!**

1. Our cafeteria food is never any good.

The request: \_\_\_\_\_

Two ways: \_\_\_\_\_

2. I'm so tired of reading about things that don't apply at all to my life!

The request: \_\_\_\_\_

Two ways: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I'm so over boyfriends like you. I can't handle your mind games.

The request: \_\_\_\_\_

Two ways: \_\_\_\_\_

4. It's way too cold in here!

The request: \_\_\_\_\_

Two ways: \_\_\_\_\_

5. I don't have enough time to finish all this homework!

The request: \_\_\_\_\_

Two ways: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Algebra is impossible!

The request: \_\_\_\_\_

Two ways: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Ugh, Cindy always gets the lead roles in our productions!

The request: \_\_\_\_\_

Two ways: \_\_\_\_\_

---

# LISTEN “ING”

There's a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is a physical process. For most people it happens automatically. Listening is a skill that involves hearing and also involves meaning making, comprehension and communication. Like most skills, listening takes practice. There are many natural barriers to effective listening like environmental distractions, internal dialogues and personal agendas. This activity helps illustrate the difference between hearing and listening, and helps students become aware of their own personal listening barriers.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students learn the difference between hearing and listening.
- Students become familiar with different types of listening barriers.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Pair students and have them sit facing each other. Ask them to pick one person to be the speaker and the other to be the listener.
2. Instruct the speakers to describe their ideal family vacation (or any topic).
3. Without letting the speakers hear, ask the listeners to count the number of words ending in “ing” that their partner says. This can be done by pulling all of the listeners aside or with written instructions.
4. Ask the speaker to talk for 3-4 full minutes. Encourage them to be inventive and fill the entire time.
5. Break for discussion.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Listeners, how many “ing” words did you count?
- Listeners, how much of the speakers story do you recall? Were you able to concentrate on both the story and the “ing” words?
- Speakers, did you feel like you were being listened to? How can you tell when someone's really listening?

6. Ask the speaker to describe one of their most vivid dreams (or any topic).
7. Ask the listeners to truly listen (perhaps tell them they'll be asked to summarize the speaker's description afterward).
8. Ask the speaker to talk for 3-4 full minutes.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Listeners, how was it different listening this time compared to last time?
- Speakers, did you feel like your partner was listening? How could you tell?
- We don't really count “ing” words, but we do let things get in the way of our listening. What are some things or thoughts that sometimes keep you from really listening, even though you can hear the words? Do you have examples?

---

# TELEPHONE

This is the classic through-the-grape-vine game. It's fun! And, it illustrates perfectly the type of misunderstandings and plain falsehoods that can come of gossip and he-said, she-said tales. Conflict often arises as a result of miscommunications just like those in the game. The skill – and this is much harder in practice – is realizing when a real-life conversation might actually be a game of Telephone.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students learn to question the reliability of rumors and second-hand accounts.
- Students understand how broken communication can lead to conflict.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Arrange seats in a large circle.
2. Whisper a short narrative into the ear of the student sitting to your left. The narrative should be no more than 2-3 sentences. Use the narratives provided for create your own.
3. Ask that student whisper the same sentences to the student to his or her left, and so on, until the tale reaches the student on your right.
4. Ask the last student to say aloud what he or she was told.
5. Say aloud the narrative with which you began. See how the two compare.
6. Play multiple rounds starting at different places in the circle each time.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How many people heard and repeated the sentences I actually began with? (See how early the communication broke down.)
- How might communicating like this lead to problems?
- Have you ever been involved in a game of telephone in real life? What was that like?
- When and if you heard your name in a narrative, how did that change your reaction? Did you listen more carefully? Did you want to repeat what was said?
- What are some ways we can prevent miscommunications like this from happening?

## ALTERNATIVELY

Split the class in half and have each group form a line standing shoulder to shoulder. Whisper the same narrative at the beginning of each line and have it work its way to their ends. Ask the student at the end of each line to write what they heard on the board. Compare what makes it through each line.

If it seems safe, create narratives that use the names of students in the class. Observe how this affects the game.

---

# TELEPHONE NARRATIVES

- There was a huge ordeal in Mrs. Jones' room second period. Jack got mad at Sergio for repeatedly knocking his books off his desk, and they started yelling like crazy. I heard they both got suspensions.
- Elliot likes Rachel but there's no way she likes him back. He's always hovering around and doing things for her, but I think she thinks they're just friends. Plus, I heard she has a crush on Lawson.
- Oh man you missed the wildest PE, like two people cried. Justin was throwing the dodgeballs way too hard and the whole other team was getting mad. They got him with like three balls at once and he lost it. You know how he hates to lose.
- Did you hear what happened at the football game with Kelsey and Malcolm? I can't say, but it involves the bleachers, the K-word and a whole bunch of people watching. It's all anyone's talking about. I don't even know if we won.
- Nobody knows where Silvia's been. She her family just moved without telling anyone and now they live in Florida or Florence or somewhere. But Jackie saw her sister at the mall this weekend so maybe that's not true.
- I heard Mr. Rhinehart got fired and that's why he's not a school anymore. The substitutes only say they don't know when he'll be back, but I bet it's never. Someone said he was caught stealing a computer from the lab.
- I think Graham is super cute but I'm embarrassed to tell him. Will you talk to him, pleeeeeease? See if he likes me or not. But you can't tell him I asked you to, just bring it up randomly and let me know what he says.
- Huston told everyone I bike to school because my family's too poor to own a car. Ugh, he's such liar and what does he know, anyway? I bike because I live close to school and I like to be able to go wherever I want after.

---

# WHEN, I FEEL, I NEED

It's been said that "you" and "should" are the most dangerous words in the English language. They're accusatory and directive and often very hard to hear. They commonly rouse anger and a what-gives-you-the-right type of defensiveness. I-messages, statements that only describe the speaker, are harder to dispute and can greatly

improve the quality of conversation in confrontational situations. This activity helps students identify their emotions and express them using a standard I-statement.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students learn to construct a basic I-message about their emotions and desires.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Arrange seats in a large circle.
2. In go-around fashion, have each student craft an I-statement using the formula "When... I feel... I need..."  
Ex. *"When I do not understand an assignment, I feel frustrated. I need to ask a friend or teacher for help."*
3. All students can respond to the same "when," or you may provide each student with a new "when." Use the "when..." prompts provided or create your own.
4. Help students identify real emotions and avoid embedded you-statements. "I feel disrespected" is an emotion and I-statement. "I feel like you were disrespectful" is neither.
5. Give each student an opportunity to practice 3-4 I-statements.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do all people respond to a situation with the same feelings and needs?
- Did any of your classmates have responses that struck you as very different from your own response? If so, was it surprising?
- Why might I-statements like these be useful in a tense situation?
- How would respond to an I-message like this?

## ALTERNATIVELY

In go-around fashion, have each student contribute one part of the statement so that it takes three students to complete a full "When, I feel, I need" message. The first student invents a "when." The next student listens to the "when" and adds how he or she would feel, "I feel..." The third students listens to the feeling and adds what he or she would need, "I need..."

Go around and switch up the order until all students have had a chance to contribute each piece.

---

# “WHEN” PROMPTS

- When I am lied to...
- When I am in a fight with my parents...
- When I don't understand a concept in school...
- When I am not invited to a party...
- When I like someone...
- When I don't get enough sleep...
- When I don't like what's for lunch...
- When I do well on a test...
- When I do badly on a test...
- When I am called names...
- When I hear my friend called names...
- When it's the day of a big game...
- When I'm in a fight with my friend...
- When I lose something valuable...
- When my pet died...
- When a teacher yells at me...
- When I'm misunderstood...
- When I'm told I can't do something...
- When I hear racist language...
- When I hear sexist language...
- When I already know what we're learning in class...
- When I break up with someone...
- When I see my worst enemy...
- When I have class with my best friend...
- When I don't like what I'm wearing...
- When I have a ton of homework...

Name:

Date:

---

# YOU AND I-MESSAGES

## DIRECTIONS

**Rewrite the following you-statements as I-messages. Think about the feelings and requests the speaker is trying to communicate.**

1. You haven't done anything for our project!

---

2. You never pass the ball. You'd rather lose than let anyone else be the hero.

---

3. You knew I liked him and you went out with him anyway!

---

4. Stop cheating! You can't look at my paper just because you didn't study.

---

5. You chew too loudly. It's distracting.

---

6. Just because you don't care about your clothes doesn't mean I shouldn't.

---

7. You shouldn't write things like that on Facebook.

---

8. You do NOT get to talk to my friend that way!

---

9. Do you understand how lines work? Wait your turn like everyone else.

---

# i-INTERPRETER

When we're upset with someone, we often express our dissatisfaction in the form of you-statements: "You missed my game again. You never show up when you say you will." We accuse, guess at others' intentions and reprimand their actions. Rather than improve the situation, you-statements tend to trigger defensiveness and provoke denial and rebuttal. I-statements, on the other hand, focus on one's own experience and feelings: "I was really looking forward to seeing you at my game. I felt disappointed when I didn't." I-statements are an opportunity to share your perspective. They are easier to hear than accusations and harder to contest. This activity allows students to practice forming I-statements and to appreciate the difference between blame and self-expression.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students practices forming I-statements and understand the advantages of I-statements in communication.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Pair students. Ask one student to be the *speaker* and the other to act as the speaker's *i-Interpreter*.
2. Ask each speaker and his/her i-Interpreter to partner with another speaker and interpreter, creating groups of four.
3. Ask the speakers to enter into a mock disagreement. Speakers may only say one sentence at a time alternating back and forth AND may only speak in you-statements. The speakers can invent their own disagreement or use the handout "You Made Us Fail!".
4. After each statement, and before the other speaker responds, ask the speaker's i-Interpreter to restate the sentence as an I-statement.
5. Continue - first speaker, first interpreter, second speaker, second interpreter – for 5-10 minutes.

## REMINDER

Watch out for disguised you-statements. "I feel like you missed my game again" is not a true feeling and it's not an I-statement. It's an accusation with "I" in front of it. Ensure that i-Interpreters focus on real emotions and personal experiences.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- As a speaker, which was it easier to hear, you-statements or I-statements? Why?
- As an i-Interpreter, what was challenging about crafting I-statements.
- Why might having an i-Interpreter (or the ability to speak in I-statements) be useful in a disagreement?

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# YOU MADE US FAIL!

SPEAKER 1

## DIRECTIONS

**Read the following statements aloud to the other speaker, as though in a disagreement.**

**1) Read the first line and then have your i-Interpreter reframe it. 2) Listen to the other speaker and interpreter. 3) Repeat this process for each line.**

1. We got an "F"?! I told you your half of the report wasn't good enough!
2. You barely gave me anything to edit! You said you would talk with Mrs. Harris to get more ideas.
3. Why? It's not like you're spending a lot of time doing homework. You made me do this project all by myself!
4. Well you could have contributed more. This was supposed to be a two-person project.
5. You wanted to write about videogames! You didn't take this report seriously at all.
6. Passing isn't good enough! You don't care about your grades, but I do.
7. You have to talk to her with me. We'll seem more serious if we both ask.



---

# YOU MADE US FAIL!

SPEAKER 2

## DIRECTIONS

**Read the following statements aloud to the other speaker, as though in a disagreement.**

**1) Listen to the other speaker and interpreter. 2) Read your first line and then have your i-Interpreter reframe it. 2) 3) Repeat this process for each line.**

1. You said you would edit it! I thought you had this handled.
2. No, you told me to, just like you bossed me through the rest of the assignment, but I don't have time to meet with teachers after class.
3. I have to babysit. Just because you have all day to do homework doesn't me everyone does.
4. You wouldn't let me contribute! You hated all of my ideas.
5. And you're taking it too seriously. It's just one grade. You'll still pass the class.
6. Well if it matters so much, you should talk to Mrs. Harris. You won't get a better grade by yelling at me.
7. You know Mrs. Harris hates me. You're better off on your own.

# Negotiation and Mediation Skills

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Negotiation and its three-party cousin, mediation, are staples of effective, nonviolent conflict resolution. Student-driven peer mediation exists in many middle schools as a primary dispute resolution mechanism. And many conflict education resolution programs incorporate negotiation and mediation skills training into their curriculums. Trained students are more effective listeners, have more keen emotional awareness, and are better able to communicate their own interests as well as identify the interests of others.

Activities in this section provide opportunities to practice many principle skills of negotiation and mediation including, paraphrasing, reframing, using open-ended questions and interest identification. This section of CRAMSS also offers a series of school based conflict scenario and role-plays which students can use to hone their skills as mediators.

## Activities

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- ★ Cross the Line
- ★ What's Fair?
- ★ Mediator's Iceberg
- ★ From Positions to Interests
- ★ The Pitchers
- ★ Speed Dating
- ★ 3 Framing
- ★ ReFRAMES
- ★ Role-plays: Blue Streak, Phone Games, Rumor Amor

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# CROSS THE LINE

Negotiation is commonly used to settle disagreements. Although we don't typically call it such, we negotiate all the time – with ourselves, with our friends, with our parents and coworkers. For students these negotiations might look like: Should I keep studying or catch up on my shows? I'll do the dishes if you let me go to Matt's house after. All of the exchanges involve negotiation, and often, so do conflicts. In this activity, students will learn basic negotiation strategies and how negotiations can be affected by circumstance.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students learn and employ common negotiation tactics.
- Students understand how power imbalances and external pressures can influence negotiations.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Create a long line on the classroom floor using masking tape.
2. Pair students and have them face each other across the line.
3. Each student's goal is to convince his/her partner to cross the dividing line. They may use any tactic except physical force. The partner that successfully convinces his/her partner to cross the line wins.
4. After 5 minutes or once one partner from each pair has crossed the line, discuss the activity.

## COMMON NEGOTIATION TACTICS

1. **Contending/power moves** – Attempts to force the other party into concession: threats, leveraging relationship, lying, refusal to negotiate.  
EX: *You might as well come over here because I'm not budging.*
2. **Concessions/compromising** – Moves that make it easier for the other party to agree with you: bribes, lessening your demands, promises of future favors,  
EX: *If you cross the line, I'll do your math homework.*
3. **Process moves** – Changing the structural dynamics of the negotiation: enlisting support, setting switching, providing perspective.  
EX: *C'mon just cross. It's just a dumb school game.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What negotiation strategies did you use to persuade your partner? (Can lead into discussion of common negotiation tactics.)
- If you crossed the line, why? What convinced you?
- Did anyone think to simply switch places (win-win)?

## ALTERNATIVELY

- Put most of the class across from one or two students (demonstrates power imbalance).
- Secretly inform one side of the line that if they do not convince their partner to cross, they will HAVE TO cross at the end of negotiations (demonstrates a weak BATNA).
- Announce a time limit - either very short (1 min.) or very long (10 min.) - and discuss how time constraints affect strategy.
- Tape down 5 parallel lines, creating 7 divisions. Discuss how the ability to make incremental concessions affects negotiation.
- Implement a point or prize system. Announce that those who convince their partner to cross receive 2 points/prizes; those who cross receive 1 point/prize; if neither partner crosses, no points or prizes are awarded.

# WHAT'S FAIR?

In negotiation we like to know that we're getting a "fair" deal. What that means depends on the context and people with whom you're negotiating. Different standard of fairness apply to different situations. In business, the market determines the fair price of goods. In sports, we defer to the rules of the game or the referee's judgment. To get a fair result from negotiation, it helps to appeal to a commonly accepted standard. However, in some scenarios, there may not be a common standard or there may be more than one. This exercise helps students think about different standards of fairness and how those standards might be affected by circumstance.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students think about the different standards of fairness that exist and that can be appealed to in negotiation.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Ask students to complete the handout "What's Fair" individually or in pairs.
2. Encourage students to think of all possible standards to which one might appeal, even if some of those standards don't seem fair to them.  
*EX: Margaret stole \$300 from the cash register where she works to pay her rent. Margaret's manager discovered the theft and demanded she return the money or he'll call the police.*
  - a) The laws of the state or country
  - b) Finders keepers, the money goes where there's the most need
3. Discuss students' answers. Create a list of their suggested standards of fairness on the board.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What if, in conflict #2, Adam and Stephen played in the NBA instead of gym class? What standards of fairness might apply then? How does context affect standards of fairness?
- What if, in conflict #3, Nicole was Yazmin's sister? Would the standards of fairness change? How does the relationship between parties affect standards of fairness?
- What do you think is the fairest resolution to each problem? Why?

## ALTERNATIVELY

- Ask students to partner and compare their responses. Did they think of different standards of fairness for the same conflict? If so, how might this complicate resolution?

Name:

Date:

---

# WHAT'S FAIR?

## DIRECTIONS:

**Consider the conflicts below. Answer the following questions: a) What standard of fairness would usually be applied in this situation? b) To what other standards of fairness might you appeal?**

1. Margaret stole \$300 from the cash register where she works to pay her rent. Margaret's manager discovered the theft and demanded she return the money or he'll call the police.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Adam's P.E. class has been playing basketball all week. Stephen always plays point guard. He's by far the best basketball player in the class, but Adam believes he should get a turn.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Nicole wants to buy Yazmin's car. Yazmin is asking for \$6,000 but Nicole is convinced the car is only worth \$4,500.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Kyle, Cameron and Ellie are playing Monopoly. Ellie is winning badly, so Kyle and Cameron decide to join forces and pool their assets. Ellie accuses them of cheating.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Mr. Lincoln is good at his job. He's done it for 25 years and often finishes tasks ahead of schedule and leaves work early. But the company recently hired a new, younger manager who requires Mr. Lincoln stay until 5pm everyday. Mr. Lincoln is outraged.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

---

# MEDIATOR'S ICEBERG

This classic metaphor is an easy way to illustrate the relationship between positions, interests and needs in conflict. The analogy helps students understand that what's immediately visible in conflict is often only "the tip of the iceberg." While the larger, more significant issues are below the surface waiting to be uncovered.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students learn to distinguish between positions and interests.
- Students become create and become familiar with a list of human needs.

## THE ICEBERG

**Positions:** in conflict, people often have very specific demands. They're usually easy to identify because disputing people are quite up front about them, "I want a turn!" "I will not be his partner!" "I think she should stop talking!" These are all positions. And it's often the case that our positions are odds with others', especially in conflict. Positions are the tip of the iceberg. They're visible but normally only a small part of the issue.

**Interests:** Interests are the deeper, more general desires and emotions in which positions are rooted. A desire for fairness; wanting to be comfortable with your partner; feeling heard – these are all interests. Peoples' positions represent one way to satisfy their interests, but usually there are others. Interests are the bulk of the iceberg hidden below the surface. They're harder to see, but once you do, the problem may seem more reconcilable. You may even find that the two tips are actually the same berg!

**Needs:** Needs are the fundamental things that all people strive to maintain. They include physical needs like food, water and shelter, as well as psychological and emotional needs like belonging, relationship, identity, love and purpose. Needs the water in which positions and interests are immersed. They're implicit to all of our actions and desires, buoying both our agreements and disagreements.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Draw the iceberg diagram on the board and hand out a copy of "The Mediator's Iceberg" (p. 3) to each student.
2. Explain the difference and relationship between positions, interests and needs, and why this is useful in mediation. Use the reference on the next page for more direction.
3. As you explain, ask students for examples of positions and related interests. Fill their suggestions into the diagram.
4. Brainstorm a list of Needs with students and fill their suggestions into the "water" area of the diagram.
5. Encourage students to reference their "The Mediator's Iceberg" handouts when thinking through a conflict or conducting a mediation.

**What might the water surface represent?**

People are often vocal about their positions while withholding or unaware of their interests. The water surface represents this obscurity and the need to "dive deeper" to find the real source of conflict.

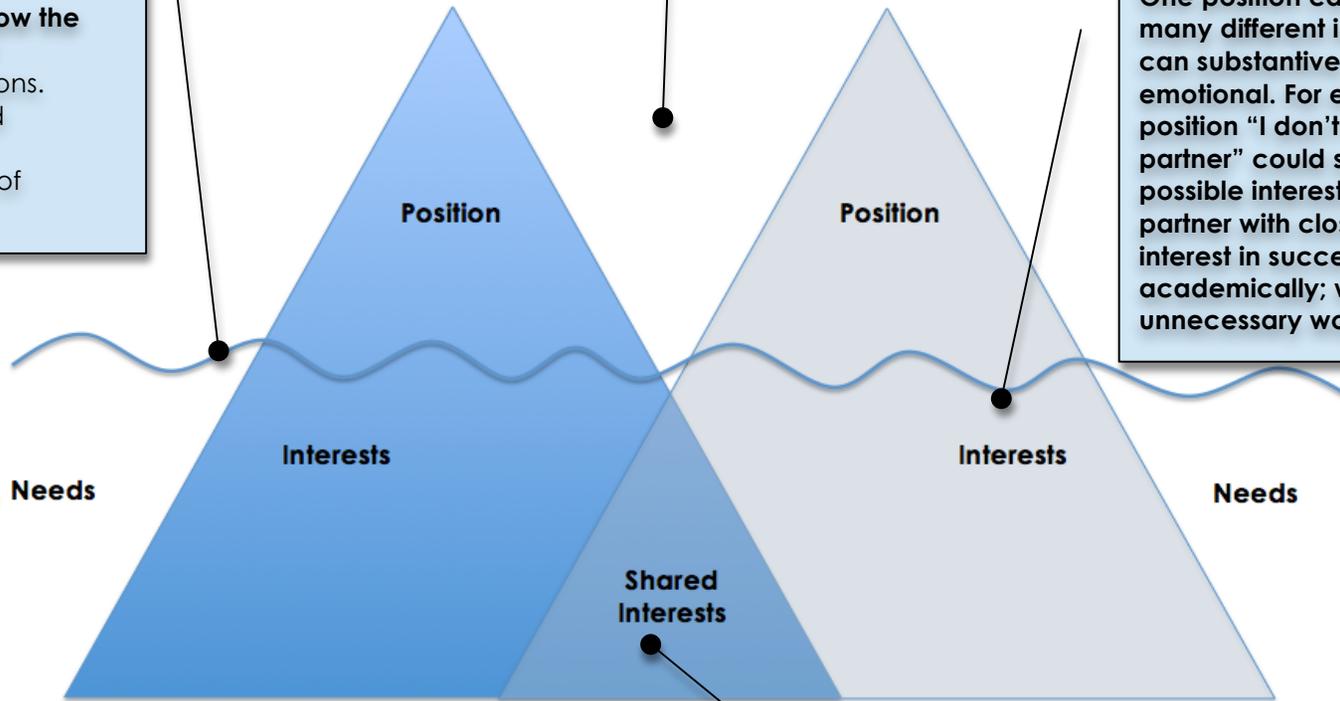
**How do you get below the surface to interests?**

Asking "why" questions. Acknowledging and exploring emotions. Identifying patterns of conflict.

**How does the separation between iceberg tips relate to positions in conflict?**

People's positions are often at odds. Their desires can seem very different and irreconcilable. It is usually only after uncovering interests that problems appear resolvable.

**One position can represent many different interests. Interests can substantive, relational and emotional. For example, the position "I don't want to be his partner" could suggest several possible interests: a desire to partner with closer friends, an interest in succeeding academically; wanting to avoid unnecessary work.**



**Almost all negative emotions are the result of unsatisfied needs. For example, loneliness could result from a lack of companionship. When brainstorming needs a good question to ask yourself is: When I feel sad/mad/bored/scared/etc, I'm feeling a lack of what?**

**Why is it helpful to point out shared interests in mediation?** People in conflict often perceive the other person as their enemy. Highlighting common interests can eliminate some of that animosity and lead to further agreements.

### Positions

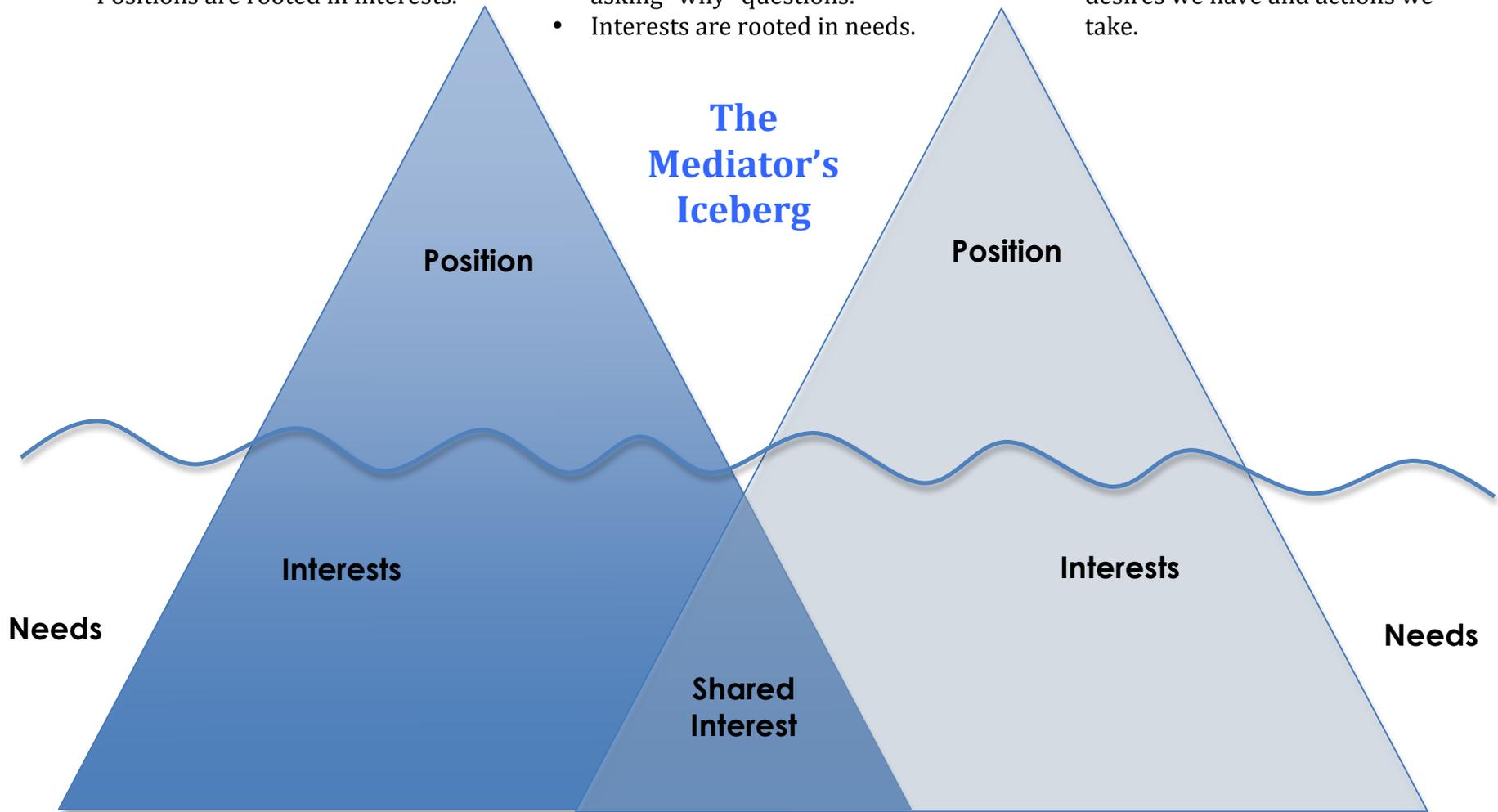
- A demand or preferred course of action
- Positions are easy to spot (above the surface), but usually only a small part of the problem
- In conflict, people's positions are often at odds.
- Positions are rooted in interests.

### Interests

- The reasons behind a position.
- Interests are often harder to see (below the surface), but account for a large part of the problem.
- People often have interests in common.
- Interests can be uncovered by asking "why" questions.
- Interests are rooted in needs.

### Needs

- The fundamental things and feelings for which all people strive.
- Negative emotions are almost always caused by an unsatisfied need.
- Needs are the root of all the desires we have and actions we take.



Name:

Date:

---

# FROM POSITIONS TO INTERESTS

## DIRECTIONS

**Read the positions stated below. Think about the interests that might lay behind each position. Discuss your answers with the class.**

1. Position: You clean the bathroom, since I cleaned the kitchen.

Interest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Position: We can't be friends if you keep talking to him.

Interest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Position: You're always team captain. It's my turn.

Interest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

4. Position: This is where I always sit. I'm not moving.

Interest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Position: No way. Last time I told you my grades, you told my mom.

Interest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Position: We're making a poster board for our project. That's final.

Interest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

7. Position: I wouldn't be caught dead in those jeans.

Interest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

8. Position: I am not going in there. It's scary.

Interest(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name:

Date:

---

# THE PITCHERS

## DIRECTIONS

**Read the following scenario. Answer the questions below, identifying the related positions, interests and emotions.**

## SCENARIO

Lina and Sarah are both pitchers for their school's softball team. Neither has been selected as the starter and that's led to fierce competition and animosity between the two of them. Towards the end of a recent practice they got into a screaming match and their coaches had to break them up. Their head coach, Coach Marrz, sat them down to discuss their issue.

### LINA

Lina is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader and this is her second year on the team. She is naturally athletic and plays on the basketball and track teams as well as the softball team. Last year she played center field where she was a star, but has always wanted to pitch and believes she would be good at it. She spent all summer practicing pitches with her dad and got pretty good. Lina asked Coach Marrz to let her try pitching and he agreed, but told her that she would be splitting practice time with one of last year's pitchers, Sarah. Recently, however, it hasn't seemed to Lina like much of a split. Sarah always gets the first reps, and whenever Lina does get a turn on the mound, Sarah is overly critical of her performance. Sarah is cold to her and nitpicks little mistakes, and it feels like the rest of the team takes her less seriously as a result. Lina doesn't understand this animosity. She pitches just as well, if not better than Sarah, and thinks the team should be grateful for her skill. There should at least be fair competition for the starting position, based on merit. It's aggravating to be belittled by someone who's supposed to be a teammate.

### SARAH

Sarah is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader and has been on the softball team since entering middle school. As a 6<sup>th</sup> grader Sarah practiced as a pitcher, but didn't pitch in any games. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade she was the team's relief pitcher, but still didn't see that much playing time. Sarah didn't mind playing backup. She understood that older girls usually got more field time, and knew that her turn would come. At the end of last season, Coach Marrz complimented her spirit and knack for leadership, and assured her that she would be on the mound the following year. Now, though, it seems she is once again falling into someone else's shadow. Lina, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader who has never pitched before, is taking more and more reps in practice, way more reps than Sarah received in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Lina has an undeniably strong arm, but she lacks the mound awareness and leadership that Sarah has spent so long learning. There's more to pitching than throwing hard, and Sarah believes her smarts and experience will best serve the team come game time. Plus, this is supposed to be her year. She can't believe that Lina is sapping so much of her practice time. Sarah feels betrayed by Coach Marrz for even considering Lina for the starting job. She hadn't been patient. She didn't have the experience. It just wasn't fair.

Name:

Date:

---

What is Lina's position?

---

What is Sarah's position?

---

What emotions does Lina feel?

---

What emotions does Sarah feel?

---

What are Lina's interests?

---

---

What are Sarah's interests?

---

---

What interests do Lina and Sarah share?

---

---

What doesn't Lina know about Sarah's situation/feelings?

---

What doesn't Sarah know about Lina's situation/feelings?

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# SPEED DATING

The ability to accurately and succinctly paraphrase another's words is highly useful to a mediator. It shows the speaker you were listening and reinforces the essential content and emotions he or she wants to communicate, making them harder for the other party to miss. This activity allows students to practice this skill. In mediation, paraphrasing is done on the spot and you never know what someone might say. So this exercises emphasizes speed, and encourages students to quickly stretch their memories and mouths.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students practice paraphrasing.
- Students understand how paraphrasing is useful in mediation.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Arrange seats in two parallel rows so that two students sit facing each other at a comfortable talking distance.
2. In turns, ask one student in each pair to be the speaker and the other to paraphrase.
3. Ask the speakers to speak on a random topic for 30 seconds. Invent your own topics or use the prompt provided below. After 30 seconds say, "Paraphrase!"
4. In ten seconds, ask the speakers' partners to paraphrase what they heard. Encourage students to focus on the primary points of the speech and to highlight emotions. After ten seconds say, "Switch!"
5. Now, in the same pairings, the speaker will paraphrase and the paraphraser will speak on the same topic. After both have gone say, "Rotate!"
6. The students in one row will shift one seat down while the students in the other row stay seated, forming new pairings, like speed dating.
7. Continue this cycle – speak, paraphrase, switch, speak, paraphrase, rotate – until all students have been partnered.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was difficult about paraphrasing quickly like this?
- Who do you feel did an especially good job of paraphrasing your story? What made it feel well done?
- What are some reasons paraphrasing may be useful when mediating?

---

# SPEED DATING PROMPTS

- Describe your first day of school this year.
- If you could travel to any planet, which would it be and why?
- Describe the last argument you were in.
- What's the worst grade you've ever gotten and why did you get it?
- Describe your relationship with your grandparents.
- The last time you were late to school, what happened to cause your lateness?
- If you had to, how would you change the ending of your favorite movie?
- Describe your last dentist appointment.
- If you could be any fictional character, who would you be and why?
- How did you learn about the attacks of Sept 11<sup>th</sup> and what was your response?
- Describe your favorite part of elementary school.
- If WWII were to break out tomorrow, how do you think you'd react?
- In your opinion, what's the worst thing a friend can do and why?
- Describe the way you prepare and the way you feel the night before a big test.
- What would you do if you won the lottery?

---

## 3 FRAMING

The ability to reframe harmful or accusatory language is one of a mediator's most valuable skills. Insulting words like, "stupid" or accusations like, "You did that on purpose!" are commonly heard in disputes, but generally do not help one reach resolution. Plus, negative language like this is hard to hear when it's directed at you, especially if your emotions are already running hot. A good mediator can identify loaded language and restate it in a way that's less abrasive. When it's done well, a reframed statement highlights the truly important content – emotions, interests, requests – and omits the inflammatory extras.

### OBJECTIVES

- Students practice reframing harsh language.
- Students understand how insults and accusations can inhibit communication and resolution.

### DIRECTIONS

1. Group students into threes, and give each group a copy of "Reframing Prompts."
2. In their groups, ask students to take turns reframing the provided prompts. For each prompt, one student should act as the mediator, reframing the statement, while the other two students act as disputants.
3. Encourage students to think about the emotions and interests behind each statement, while eliminating aggressive language.
4. Reframes should begin with a qualifying phrase such as, "It sounds like..." or "I hear you saying that..."

EX: Whenever we work together she doesn't say anything. It's like she's dumb.

*It sounds like you value others' ideas, and you'd like to get input from your partner.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is reframing useful in mediation?
- What were some of the emotions, interests and requests you interpreted behind the negative language?
- How might you use reframing skills outside of mediation?

---

## REFRAMING PROMPTS

1. Whenever we work together she doesn't say anything. It's like she's dumb.
2. There's no way this is going to work out unless he stops acting like such an idiot.
3. She's a bad friend and a worse gossip. Anything I tell her immediately spreads around the school. I know she's telling people.
4. None of that is true, liar!
5. Whenever I see him in the hallway he's so annoying. I hate him!
6. I never want her on my team. She's bad at everything and I like winning.
7. I see him push people all the time. He's a bully plain and simple.
8. I'm so fed up with her games. It'd be fine with me if she never came to school again.
9. I've tried to tell him how I feel but it's impossible to get a word in about him. He never shuts up.
10. His last project was pathetic, like a second grader did it. Of course, he got put in my group.
11. Yeah I knew they were dating, but I didn't think it was serious. Everyone knows how she goes through boyfriends.
12. When we're at school he follows me. In class, he stares at me. When I'm at home, he texts me. It's like, leave me alone, stalker.
13. His gym locker smells like garbage. Mine is right next to his and it makes me want to throw up.
14. I'll sit here, but I'm not going to listen to her. She won't say anything worth hearing.
15. If he says one more mean thing about my boyfriend, I'll scream. Who does he think he is?
16. I always say what I think, and right now I think we aren't friends and we aren't ever going to be.
17. I'm popular. I can't be seen with losers like him. People would make fun of me.

# RE FRAMES

When people fall into disdainful positions or use accusatory, insulting words, it's usually a sign that emotions are running hot or their interests feel jeopardized. A strong outburst indicates a strong belief. It's a mediator's job – and a generally useful social skill – to read between the lines and interpret the meaningful message behind plainly mean language. In mediation, this helps defuse negative tension and makes space for truer communication.

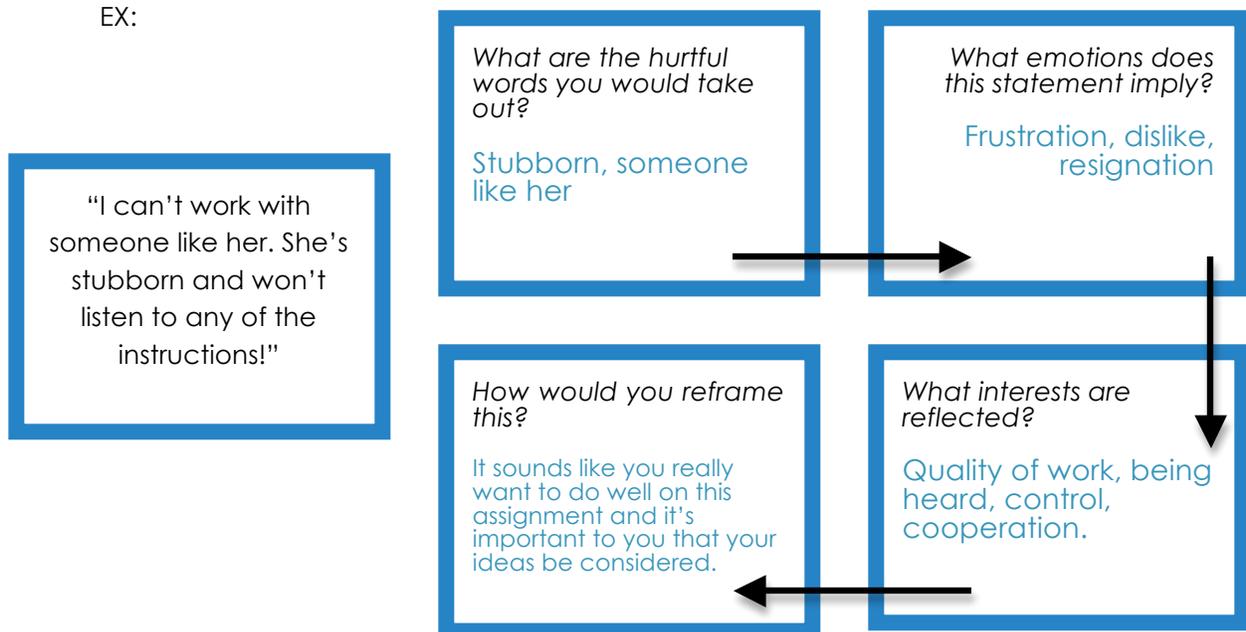
## OBJECTIVES

- Students practice reframing abrasive language.
- Students learn to identify and emphasize emotions and interests.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Individually or in small groups, ask students to complete the handout "Re FRAMES."
2. When reframing, encourage students to eliminate accusations, insults and definitive language (always, never, worst, can't). When interpreting interests, ask student to think about why someone would be upset about this topic? What important thing is being threatened?
3. Once they've completed the handout, ask students to share and discuss their answers.

EX:



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How did you spot the interests and emotions within these statements?
- What might be some of the requests that these upset speakers are trying to communicate?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# RE FRAMES

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the statements below. Answer the questions in each frame to develop a more positive and meaningful reframed statement.

"I can't work with someone like her. She's stubborn and won't listen to any of the instructions!"

*What are the hurtful words you would take out?*

*What emotions does this statement imply?*

*How would you reframe this?*

*What interests are reflected?*

"You told her about the note! I knew I shouldn't have trusted you."

*What are the hurtful words you would take out?*

*What emotions does this statement imply?*

*How would you reframe this?*

*What interests are reflected?*

"He's always interrupting class with his loud, dumb laugh."

*What are the hurtful words you would take out?*

*What emotions does this statement imply?*

*How would you reframe this?*

*What interests are reflected?*

"She swung at my face! I would have hit her back if Mr. Jones hadn't shown up."

*What are the hurtful words would you take out?*

*What emotions does this statement imply?*

*How would you reframe this?*

*What interests are reflected?*

---

# BLUE STREAK

## Mediators

Julio and Allie have art class together. Allie is one of the best artists in school, while Julio's skills are rudimentary. Yesterday, Allie joked that Julio's painting looked like "fat stick figures." Julio agreed and laughed away the comment. But today, Allie again made fun of Julio's art, pointing and snickering at it with her friends. This time Julio snapped, and reached across the table to paint a big, blue streak on Allie's paper. Allie jumped up and yelled at Julio. The art teacher separated the two and arranged for mediation.



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## Allie

Allie is absolutely furious that Julio marked her piece. It's the first rule of art, you DO NOT add to someone else's work without permission! And that wasn't just any painting; Allie was going to submit it to the art show. Now it's ruined and there's no time to make something new. Allie feels helpless. Of course, Allie also feels bad for making fun of Julio's painting, but it was only a joke. Yesterday Julio made fun of it himself! She didn't realize he would be so upset. Plus, Julio's painting *really wasn't* that good. Anyone could tell you that. A little criticism doesn't justify ruining a work of art.



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## Julio

Julio doesn't see what the big deal is. Yes, he marked one of Allie's pictures, but Allie's portfolio is FULL of pictures just as good. If she wanted to, she could make another beautiful painting in no time. Julio wouldn't be that mad if someone marked *his* paper, and he really has to try. But it IS maddening to be made fun of constantly. Julio tried to act unfazed, but Allie's words really did hurt. It doesn't bother him so much that she teased his painting. It bothers him that she's right. Julio envies people like Allie who can draw and paint so easily. Julio wishes he were that artistically gifted. It's not fair.

---

# PHONE GAMES

## Mediators

Luis let DJ play with his phone during lunch. DJ used the phone to play games and listen to some music. When Luis looked over DJ's shoulder and saw the screen he yelled, "Dude, what are you doing? Those games cost money!" DJ began to protest, but just then Mrs. Buchanan came over. "DJ stole my phone and used it to buy games," Luis told her. Mrs. Buchanan took up the phone and sent DJ to the office. After hearing DJ's side of the story, the assistant principal referred the case to mediation.



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## DJ

DJ didn't realize he was buying anything. He didn't enter a password or any credit card information. He just hit buttons until the game started working. DJ doesn't have a phone of his own, and isn't used to how easy it is to make mobile purchases. But that's not the real issue. DJ is angry that Luis accused him of stealing. He didn't steal the phone; Luis let him borrow it. More than that, DJ is upset that Mrs. Buchanan sent him to the office without even letting him explain. DJ does cause some trouble in school and knows that he has a reputation. But he feels like both Luis and Mrs. Buchanan have unfairly stereotyped him.



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## Luis

Luis is mad at DJ for purchasing songs and apps on his phone. When you use someone else's phone, just play the games already on it; don't buy new ones, obviously. DJ spent \$15 in all and Luis wants that money paid back. Luis is also upset that DJ got his phone confiscated. DJ should have been more careful with teachers around. But more than angry, Luis is worried. A couple of the songs DJ bought are inappropriate. Luis is scared of what his parents will do when they see those charges on the bill. They may even take away his phone for good. Luis needs someone to tell his parents it was all a mistake.

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# RUMOR AMOR

## Mediators

Natalie and Jordan are in the same Language Arts, Math and P.E. classes. They see a lot of each other and have become good friends, even flirtatious. However, a rumor has recently spread around the school that the two are dating. When the rumor reached her, Natalie was furious. She confronted Jordan in Language Arts and left the encounter in tears. Their teacher referred Natalie and Jordan to mediation.



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## Natalie

Natalie is outraged that Jordan would start a rumor like this. Apparently, Jordan's been calling Natalie his girlfriend all around school. She's never heard him, but it must be true. Everyone's saying it. Natalie feels betrayed and disrespected. She thought Jordan was a better friend than that. It's awful to have words put in her mouth, like she's out of control of her own life. Plus, when she asked Jordan about the rumor, he was so mean! He denied it all and said, "If I was going to call someone my girlfriend, I wouldn't choose you." Natalie was so hurt she had to leave the room. Worst of all, before all this Natalie suspected that Jordan liked her and enjoyed the feeling. She probably would have been Jordan's girlfriend if he had just asked her. But now, no way.



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## Jordan

Jordan didn't start the rumors about him and Natalie. It wouldn't even occur to him, and gossip like that is embarrassing anyway. Admittedly, Jordan's friends did have a habit of referring to Natalie as "the girlfriend." Jordan never bothered to set them straight. They were just joking and he didn't see the harm in it. He would do the same if one of his friends spent as much time with a girl as he did with Natalie. It made Jordan angry when Natalie accused him of starting the rumor. It would have been one thing if she had asked him about it privately, but she screamed at him and called him a liar in front of the whole class. It hurts that Natalie would trust a rumor more than his word. Jordan does like Natalie and thinks of her as one of his best friends. But he doesn't understand why she's gone so crazy over practically nothing.

---

# ROLE PLAY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## RUMOR AMOR

- How did assumptions contribute to this conflict?
- Is allowing a rumor to continue even if you know it's false (kind of like Jordan did) the same as starting a rumor?
- What if Natalie and Jordan confessed how much they like each other in mediation and agreed to go out? Is mediation an appropriate place to discuss dating? Is an agreement to date something you would sign down as a mediator?

## PHONE GAMES

- What potential power imbalances do you see in this conflict?
- Luis is mad that DJ wasn't careful and got his phone confiscated. What if Luis began explaining how to best hide a phone from a teacher or otherwise break school rules? How would you feel about a discussion like that in mediation?
- DJ is upset with Luis, but he also felt unfairly treated by Mrs. Buchanan. How might you handle that piece of the issue?

## BLUE STREAK

- Allie hurt Julio with her words. Julio responded by damaging her painting. Discuss the difference between verbal and physical violence. Is one worse than the other?
- What values are at odds in this scenario? What values do Julio and Allie share? Which values are misunderstood?
- Examine the different points of escalation in this conflict. How might Julio and Allie acted differently to prevent or resolve this problem on their own?

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# ROLE PLAYER PREP SHEET

Role Play Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your position? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are your interests? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What emotions did you feel in the moment, at the time of the incident?

\_\_\_\_\_

What emotions might you be feeling now, entering mediation?

\_\_\_\_\_

What doesn't the other person know about your situation, thoughts, feelings?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What don't you know about the other person's situation, thoughts, feelings?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## REMEMBER

- Be yourself. Imagine how you would feel in the described scenario and use those thoughts and emotions. You don't need to be an actor to be a role player.
- If your mediators touch on the feelings or interests you listed, they've done well! Encourage them by responding positively in your role.
- Do your best to stay in character! At times, role playing can feel silly or embarrassing, but your classmates will learn best if you take your role seriously.

---

# PEER MEDIATOR'S CHEAT SHEET

## INTRODUCTION HELPERS

- The introduction sets the mood of the mediation.
- Smile, eye-contact, friendliness
- The introduction is your best chance to engage the parties in the process and establish your authority.
- Whenever possible, make time to prepare for mediation. Strategize with you co-mediator. Rehearse your introduction.

## WHEN MEDIATION FEELS STUCK...

- Re-summarize → repeat what you've heard, what you've seen and what you've sensed so far.
- Poll Feelings → Ask participants how they're doing: "How is everyone feeling energy-wise?" "Is this feeling helpful to you?" "Where do you think we should go from here?"
- Use Transparency → Admit when you're not sure how to proceed. Ask for suggestions.
- Defer to your co-mediator → "Here's where I think we are... What do you think, co-mediator?"
- Rely on the Process → Move on to the next step. Begin a brainstorm; ask a new question; start writing an agreement.

## OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- Tell me more about...?  
Why do you think that...?
- How do you think [the other person] felt about that?
- You mentioned [blank], what happened there?
- What would a fair resolution look like to you?
- How do you view your role in this problem?
- How might you have acted differently?
- What ignited that emotion?
- What was your relationship like before this incident?
- What is it like now?

## REMEMBER

Ask questions. Don't offer solution.

The participants should work harder than you

Take notes

Be aware of your own energy