

Solving conflict today

This lesson will provide students with the opportunity to explore conflicts that exist today and identify ways in which to resolve the conflicts. Students will understand that certain types of conflict are best settled in court where the court's purpose is to administer justice (to find out the truth of things) and to settle conflicts in a fair and just way.

Students will:

1. Demonstrate a variety of methods for resolving conflicts.
2. Know which methods are acceptable in our culture.
3. Evaluate methods, understanding the role of the court system in resolving conflict.
4. Identify the conflicts best resolved through the court system.

Materials needed: Copies of **Student Handout: HE SAID, SHE DID, I WANT...**,
Student Handout: CONFLICTS IN THE NEWS

Time needed: 1 class period

Grade level: Grades 5-12

Procedure:

1. Explain that today's activity will give students a chance to examine conflict situations and begin to understand when courts should play a role in helping people resolve conflicts.
2. Divide students into groups of three or four and ask them to analyze a conflict scenario on **Student Handout: HE SAID, SHE DID, I WANT....** Each group should answer the following questions:
 - A. Who are the people involved?
 - B. What is the conflict about?
 - C. What does each person want?
 - D. What methods or techniques could be used to resolve the conflict?
 - E. Which method does your group recommend? Why?
3. Ask each group to summarize their conclusions. List on board the type of conflict (i.e. neighborhood noise), people involved (i.e. neighbor/neighbor) and methods that might be used to help resolve the conflict (i.e. compromise, fighting, having a third party make the decision, voting, chance decision-making like a flip of a coin or draw from a hat, postponing the decision, or talking through the problem to understand different points of view).

Procedure cont.

4. Discuss the methods of conflict resolution most often used in the United States. These include:
 1. **Negotiation:** the disagreeing parties resolve the conflict through discussion and resulting agreement
 2. **Mediation:** a third party who is not involved in the dispute assists the two disagreeing parties toward resolution
 3. **Arbitration:** a third party who is not involved in the dispute hears the different sides and decides what will happen
 4. **Adjudication:** a judge in a court hears the evidence and decides the case

Ask students to identify the features of a good dispute resolution process. These might include:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> D certainty of rules | <input type="checkbox"/> D finality | <input type="checkbox"/> D flexibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D participation | <input type="checkbox"/> D simplicity | <input type="checkbox"/> D public respect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D easy access | <input type="checkbox"/> D loser feels process was fair | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D role of truth | <input type="checkbox"/> D rules developed by disagreeing parties | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D pre-established system | | |

5. Ask students to give examples of each type.
6. Ask students to identify what types of conflicts are best resolved in court? (Problems dealing with the law, problems that are complex enough to warrant court time.) What is it about courts that make it a good place to resolve certain conflicts? (parties must appear, goal of court is to have a fair result, every one must use same rules, fair court procedures, court can award damages, due process, innocent until proven guilty)
7. Using the **Student Handout: CONFLICTS IN THE NEWS** have students go through the newspaper looking for examples of disputes, picking one to analyze and discuss with the class. Students should answer the following:
 - A. Who are the parties to the conflict (people involved)?
 - B. What is the conflict about according to the article?
 - C. What additional information would be helpful?
 - D. What does each person want?
 - E. What techniques were used, are being used, or might be used to resolve the dispute?
8. Focusing on news stories about court cases, ask students to explain why the dispute is before the court and why other methods would be less effective? Point out to students that people usually do not resort to the courts unless other methods have failed.

Student Handout: HE SAID, SHE DID, I WANT...

Analyze each scenario by answering the following questions:

- A. Who are the people involved in the conflict?
- B. What is the conflict about?
- C. What does each person want?
- D. What methods or techniques could be used to resolve the conflict?
Brainstorm a variety of methods.
- E. Which method does your group recommend? Why?

1. Two boys who were good friends earned quite a lot of money in December and January shovelling the driveways in their neighborhood. Both boys had to work hard to keep all of the driveways clear. Near the end of January, one of the boys told the other that he wanted to quit. The second boy did not want to quit, and couldn't think of anyone else who would be available to work with him if his friend refused to continue.

2. Diane is against U.S. policy in Central America and wore to school a sweatshirt with a slogan expressing her dissatisfaction. Her first hour teacher sent her to the principal's office and Diane was asked to go home and change clothes. If she refused she would be suspended from school. Diane believes she has a right to express her opinions in school. The principal is concerned that the shirt will distract other students from their schoolwork.

3. Jessica wants to redecorate her room by hanging posters on all the walls, and even some on the ceiling. Her father thinks that makes the room look cluttered, and that using either pins or tape will damage the walls.

4. The Anderson family and the Jones family live next door to each other. A large oak tree in the Anderson yard has branches overhanging the Jones' garage. Mr. Jones thinks the tree has oak wilt and wants Mr. Anderson to cut back the branches of the tree. Mr. Anderson insists the tree is healthy.

Student Handout: HE SAID, SHE DID, I WANT... cont.

5. A famous baseball player was photographed in his new sports car. The car manufacturer used the picture for a series of magazine ads. The baseball player says they shouldn't have used the picture without paying him for its use. The manufacturing company says that since the ad does not say the player is endorsing the car, his rights have not been violated.

6. While Chris and Sheri were dating, he gave her \$100 to help her pay rent. After they broke up, Chris asked Sheri for the \$100 he had loaned her. Sheri said the money was a gift and she owed Chris nothing.

7. Dan, who is sixteen, bought a \$150 car stereo at a local discount store. A month later, the stereo quit working. When he returned the car stereo to the store, the manager showed him a small sign near the display that said, in small print, "No warranties on electronic equipment valued less than \$200.00."

8. Mr. Smith slipped on the ice in front of Parker's Convenience Store and broke his leg. He spent three days in the hospital and missed ten days of work. He said the accident was Mr. Parker's fault because the ice hadn't been cleared in front of the store and Mr. Parker should have to pay the hospital bills and lost wages. Mr. Parker said there were patches of ice on the sidewalks all over town and that pedestrians had the responsibility to wear proper footwear and watch out for icy spots.

9. There are three teenagers in the Carlson family and all of their friends like to spend time at the Carlson's home, especially during summer vacation. Needless to say there is always lots of activity and frequently lots of noise in and around the house. The Carlson's neighbor is a nurse who works the night shift and needs to sleep during the day. She says she cannot sleep when there is so much noise coming from next door.

10. Jake had a few beers while watching football at a friend's house. On his way home he was stopped by a police officer. The officer asked Jake if he realized he went through a red light. Jake was sure the light was yellow and refused to answer the officer's questions.

Student Handout: CONFLICTS IN THE NEWS

Select a news story about a conflict. Answer the following questions and be prepared to discuss your answers with the class.

A. Who are the parties involved?

B. What is the conflict about according to the article?

C. What additional information would be helpful?

D. What does each person want?

E. What techniques were used, are being used, or might be used to resolve the dispute?
