

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Originally created by Rabbi Sharon Forman at the URJ Kutz Camp–NFTY North American Leadership Center, July 1998

Adapted by the Youth Division Staff for the NFTY Study theme, “Conflict at Home and Abroad: Striving for Insight,” January 2004

GOALS

- To promote the use of “talking it out” as a productive strategy for resolving conflicts
- To encourage young leaders to examine the nature of conflicts in human relationships and understand that conflict is a natural part of human behavior
- To open up the minds of young leaders to see that Jewish tradition applauds peaceful interactions and that peaceful resolutions of conflicts are possible when both parties treat one another with respect, listen attentively, and work to solve the problem.

OBJECTIVES

Program participants will be able to:

- Define conflict
- Recognize different responses to conflict (ignore/deny, confront aggressively/fight, or problem solve)
- Recognize anger and frustration as normal feelings that often accompany conflict
- List the steps that Barbara Porro articulates as steps in conflict resolution in her 1996 ASCD book, Talk It Out
- Review strategies for cooling off
- Practice conflict resolution strategies of talking it out (problem solving) through the use of skits
- Apply their knowledge as they present skits to the entire group

TIMETABLE

0:00-0:15	Introduction of topic by program leader, game
0:15-0:20	Students breakup into groups (led by groupleaders)
0:20-0:55	Group Work and skit preparation
0:55-1:20	Groups reconvene and skit presentation
1:20-1:25	Songleader leads songs about peace

MATERIALS:

lists of 8 student groups
skit directions
markers
poster board (if groups choose to utilize during their skits)

DETAILED PROCEDURE:

INTRODUCTION

0:00-0:15

Program leader introduces the program and does a trigger game.

Break Into Groups

0:15-0:20

Break into groups – the amount and size of groups will vary based on the size of the group at large -- the ideal size for this program is 5-8 participants per group.

Group Work and Skit Preparation

0:20-0:55

Groupleaders will build a “safe” community feeling by having participants tell their names. Ask if anyone would like briefly to share a conflict (a disagreement or fight about something important) they had recently. How did they handle it (ignore or deny? “fight it out,” confront it aggressively? or problem solve, talk it out)?

Groupleaders will continue with the following instructive discussion:

Tonight, we’re going to encourage you to use problem solving as a preferred method for resolving conflicts. Why do you think this is our favorite method? (When you ignore problems, they can escalate, resentment can build, you can become passive aggressive, your needs never are met because you haven’t articulated them. When you fight with someone, you can hurt them or yourself or an innocent bystander. You may lose a friendship.)

Talking it out allows you to tell the person you are angry or upset with what is bothering you. You say it in a way that does not hurt or blame the person. Then you listen to what the other person has to say and find ways to solve the problem that makes both parties satisfied.

Groupleaders will present this four-step version of problem solving on poster board.

1. Stop. Cool off.
2. Talk and listen.
3. Think of ways to solve the problem.
4. Choose the idea that you both can agree upon.

Groups discuss each step, beginning with

- (1) “Stop. Cool off.”

When you have a problem, anger is one of the emotions you may feel. Anger helps you realize that you want to change something. Everyone feels angry sometimes. How can expressing anger inappropriately make your problem worse? How can you help yourself feel better when you are angry or upset? (Students may suggest: counting to 10; changing their scenery; taking deep breaths; doing something physical; creating an art work; talking to an understanding third party about the conflict). When Eskimo children feel tense,

they are encouraged to stare at a bird or a fish. This activity removes the child from the disturbing situation in the same way a bird might take flight or a fish might swim away. The children are then taught to return to the problem at a later time when they have calmed down. Once you have cooled off, you are ready to go to the person who upset you and calmly talk about the problem.

(2) “Talk and listen.”

- Introduce participants to the concept of expressing themselves through the use of “I-messages” rather than “You-messages.”
- When you express yourself by telling people that they wreck things for you, they hurt you, they ruin things, they react differently than when you tell them that you feel hurt or annoyed or puzzled or ignored when something happens. Discuss the concept of I-messages and You-messages.
- You-messages make people feel you are blaming them or judging them for doing something bad or wrong. You-messages are viewed as put-downs. When people hear you-messages, they often get defensive. It’s hard for them to hear what you are saying, and it’s hard for them to change when they feel their pride is at stake.
- Show participants how to make “I-messages”:

I _____ (feeling) when you _____ (specific behavior) because _____ (how it affects me).

- Give examples. (E.g., “I feel frustrated when you interrupt because then I can’t finish what I want to say.”)
- Other ways to give I-messages are:
I need _____.
I would like _____ (what would make the situation better?).
I don’t like it when you _____ because _____.

Group leaders discuss good listening behaviors. Discuss how most people listen in conflict situations. People may fear that by listening, the other party thinks they agree. If they listen, they are admitting that they are wrong. Why does listening sometimes feel like losing? Why is listening crucial to problem solving?

(3) “Think of ways to solve the problem.”

Have both parties identify their needs (these may differ from their “wants”). Write out what both parties need. Now brainstorm solutions (come up with as many ideas as possible without making any comments about the acceptability of the ideas). Choose the idea that you both like best. Ask each other, “does that work for you?”

(4) “Make a plan. Go for it!”

Ask each other what you will do if certain situations arise. If this conflict happened again, what could you do differently?

Group leaders ask participants to read assigned conflict-skit. Have them work through the problem solving process. Act out the skit USING EVERY PERSON IN THE GROUP (possibly having posters identifying parts of conflict resolution tactic). Prepare to present to entire group.

Groups reconvene and skit presentation

0:55-1:20

All groups reassemble in the Program Room. Each group presents 1 of 4 skits to the entire group

Closing Song

1:20-1:25

Song leader will conclude the program by singing with the group songs of peace.

Conflict Resolution Skits

Group 1

You are at a concert, and having a great time. The band finishes its first set, and you realize you have to be home in 30 minutes to make curfew. You call your parents, and ask them if you can stay for the last half of the concert. They say, “no”, and tell you to come right home. You are very upset. How can you resolve this conflict using the steps to “talking it out?”

Group 2

You have worked really hard to raise the money to buy yourself a car when you get your drivers license. The big day finally comes, you get your license, and you buy yourself a really nice car. Your brother, who couldn’t afford to buy himself a car, asks you if he can borrow it when you are not using it. You agree to let him use the car. Now whenever you want to go anywhere, you can’t find the keys. You are very upset. How can you resolve the conflict using the steps to “talking it out?”

Group 3

Your best friend finally met an amazing female who thinks he’s really attractive. They are now “an item” and are romantically involved. You and him have been hanging out everyday after school for as long as you can remember. Now, he’s completely abandoned you to spend every free moment with his new girlfriend and her friends. You are frustrated. How can you resolve this conflict using the steps to “talking it out?”

Group 4

You have worked very hard at school for the last four years, and now it is time for your senior class trip. You have looked forward to relaxing on this trip and hanging out with your friends. You have been assigned a room in the hotel with several people you’re friends with and one you don’t really know, she seems like a very serious person who appears to want her rest. She asks you to let her go to sleep when lights go out. You want to “have fun,” you keep on the lights, and gossip for hours. How can you solve this conflict in a socially acceptable manner?