

**Lesson Plan # 5—Global
Title: Conflict Resolution**

Objectives: In this lesson, the participants will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of conflict resolution strategies.
2. Practice assertive communication.

Session Time: 50 – 60 minutes

Materials: Overhead projector and screen, easel and flip-chart or marker board/chalk board, transparencies, handouts, markers

Methods Used: Guided discussion, lecture, interactive participation

Instruction:

Assertive communication

The responses to fight or take flight are the most natural responses in conflict situations; however, they are not always the most effective. Assertive communication is a more effective way of dealing with people.

Definition: Assertive communication can be defined as *a person's attempt to convey his/her needs or wants while considering the needs and wants of other people.*
(Distribute “Active Listening Rules”, “De-escalators”, and “Negotiation Steps” handouts)

Have the class compare this definition with aggressive and avoidant communication. In either of these cases a person may get what he/she wants, but the needs of the other person go unmet. Although assertive communication takes practice because it feels unnatural, the key point is that an attempt is made to meet the needs and wants of all involved.

1. Introduce “I” statements: See I statement handouts

The first step in assertive communication is to have the class practice the use of “I” statements. Give the group an example of the difference between an “I” statement and a “you” statement.

Example: Pick a member from the class and role-play. Have the class member be the employee who has left the shop a mess.

You are at work and your boss comes up to you and says, “You always leave all the tools lying all over the garage. You don’t have any respect for my shop or my property”.

- Ask the class member how this interaction made him or her feel. Then ask the rest of the class the same question. Try to elicit responses as angry or defensive.
- For the same class member, use the same example. This time use an “I” statement. For example, “I have a problem. I feel disrespected when I see my tools laying around the garage because I paid a lot for them and this business is important to me”.
- Ask the class member how this interaction makes him/her feel. Then ask the rest of the class. Try to get responses such as more respected, less angry, less defensive, and more appropriate.

“I” statements are designed to express and take responsibility for your feelings rather than blaming others.

There are four steps to developing an “I” statement. The focus is on the action or the circumstance you want changed, not on the person.

- 1. First, tell the person, “I have a problem”.**
- 2. Secondly, make a non-threatening description of the problem.**
- 3. Third, tell the person how you feel about the problem.**
- 4. Finally, let reality be the disciplining agent by asking two questions:**
 - **If you continue the behavior, will it make our relationship better or worse?**
 - **Do you want our relationship to get better or worse?**

Example:

“I have a problem. When I see you spend time with other friends, I tend to get jealous and feel left out. Now, if this behavior continues, will this make our friendship better or worse? Do you want our relationship to get better or worse?”

Give these examples to the class and ask them to write “I” statements and “You” statements.

- You hear a rumor that your girl/boyfriend is dating someone else.
- You bought a car and it quit running before you got it home. You had it towed to the car lot and they fixed it. You picked it up and before you got home it quit running again.
- You fall asleep on your desk at school and are awakened by the teacher slapping the desk.

Ask the class to work in pairs to develop scenarios with dialog and then have them role-play. Have them identify how it was to use both statements. In addition ask how it was to be on the receiving end.

2. Taking Space:

Taking space is removing one's self, either mentally or physically, in order to feel safe, secure, and/or in control.

It can be necessary at times to slow down the process of becoming angry. This can be done by physically moving to a safe place or mentally by changing one's focus. The goal is to avoid escalating the situation.

Have the group give ideas that might work for them and create a list on the flipchart of concrete examples on how to mentally or physically take space. Encourage others to look at new options that may work for them.

Write on the flipchart: Rules for taking space:

1. Start by using "I" statements.
2. State your position. ("I really don't feel we can afford a new car right now")
3. Indicate that you will be gone (do not ask for permission). ("I am feeling too angry to talk about this right now.")
4. State a definite time you will return. ("I'll be back in one-half hour.")
5. Promise to work out the matter when you do return. ("When I get back, we can sit down and talk about it.")

Don't:

1. Blame others
2. Storm away
3. Debate the matter at that time
4. Order others to do something

Challenge students to think of possible ways to take space in their own environment.

Role Plays: use the "How I Handle Conflict" and "To Solve a Conflict" handouts

Have the class role play some examples as you have in the past. They can use previously mentioned situations and examples of an anger situation or a problem that has surfaced in the class. The more relevant the situation is to their lives, the greater impact it will have on them.

3. Centering and Relaxing:

Centering is a technique used to focus yourself on getting your attention, realizing your self worth, and putting the whole matter into perspective. The techniques used in centering are:

Affirmations

Thinking or saying out-loud to yourself something about you that is always positive and always true.

- I care about others and myself.
- I am a hard worker.
- I am going to make good things happen.
- I learn from my mistakes.

Have class members identify personal affirmation statements.

Deep Breathing and visualization:

Practice taking slow controlled deep breaths to help you relax and at the same time visualize yourself in a controlled subdued environment.

4. Attention Getters

Use short statements (one to three words) to get your attention once you realize that you are on the road to anger.

- Hold it ...
- Stop
- Wait a minute

Have the students identify personal attention getters.

5. Unhooks

Unhooks are a way to put everything back into perspective and prepare yourself to deal with the first feeling of conflict, if not the resolution.

- Let it go
- This too shall pass
- It's not worth it
- What comes around goes around

6. Resolution

Resolution is a willingness to resolve the situation while maintaining respect for yourself and others. There are two places resolution can occur:

- Within yourself. The purpose of resolution is to deal with those first feelings while maintaining respect for all parties. Sometimes this may include solving the issue only with you.
- With others. In this case, it is important to use "I" statements and identify the first feelings to the other person. The important point to remember is to do so while keeping respect for all parties. Also, realize that the other parties may not accept your viewpoint.

Have the class identify situations when it is not important to come to resolution. Write their responses on the flipchart. Next, have the class identify situations when it is important to come to resolution. Discuss techniques that can be used to come to resolution. Include way to deal with situations when they are unable to be resolved.

Conclusion

Go over the “Strategies for Positive Conflict Management” handout.

Note: This lesson is included in the workshop, *Anger Management and Conflict Resolution*, in the *SIPDC Catalog of Professional Development Opportunities*.

ACTIVE LISTENING RULES

1. Put all your attention on what the person is saying.
2. Restate their most important thoughts, feelings, and concerns.
3. Don't interrupt, correct mistakes, give advice, or tell you own story.
4. Give the person time to speak. Don't immediately fill the space.
5. Use non-verbal gestures to show support.

ACTIVE LISTENING STYLES

ENCOURAGING - using neutral words to help another person say more about the situation and how they feel.

RESTATING – saying in your own words what you thought you heard the other person say, including their feelings and needs.

CLARIFYING – getting more information, asking nonjudgmental questions.

DE-ESCALATORS:

1. Stay cool, calm and on center.:
 - Don't let the other person throw you off balance and force you into fighting back or escalating the conflict.
 - Avoid fast moves, swearing and defensiveness.
 - Stay in control of yourself.
 - Breathe slowly and let any negative words or feelings move past you.
2. Give the other person some space:
 - Don't back them (or yourself) into a corner, give them a way to "save face."
 - Look for common interests, common ground.
 - Use a cooling off period. Stop and think about the situation.
 - Let yourself feel the problem before reacting instinctively.
3. Listen to the other person.
 - Start out listening, then talking.
 - Say you want to solve this problem together. Let them know you don't want to fight, but want to understand.
 - Listen for why they are upset and what they need.
4. Set your limits with non-blaming statements:
 - If you can't listen, then use non-blaming statements to set your limits and communicate your needs.
 - "You messages" push people's buttons and make them defensive.
 - State how you feel.
 - Use descriptive words without "you" in it, like-"This is really a problem" or "I think we should slow down here before we start fighting."
5. Lighten things up:
 - Fights and abuse often occur when things get too serious.
 - Make a joke to break the cycle of unproductive conflict, like: "Maybe we should eat before we go any further."
 - Keep a light touch, but don't use humor to avoid your problems.
6. Admit your part:
 - Saying "sorry" or "excuse me" can help diffuse a situation. It doesn't have to mean that you are wrong and they are right.

NEGOTIATION STEPS

1. Agreeing to Solve the Problem

- **Ground Rules (verbal or non-verbal)**

**No interrupting
No name-calling
No put downs
Tell the truth**

“I have a problem I need to solve with you.”

2. Telling Your Stories

- **Use I Messages**
- **Be specific about what happened**
- **State how you feel**
- **Listen to the other person**

“I was in line first. I’m mad that you cut in. I’ve been waiting a long time to talk to the teacher.”

3. Clarifying Needs

- **State your needs**
- **Find out about the other person’s needs**
- **Discover any common interest**
- **Separate facts from feelings**

“It’s not fair; I need to be treated fairly.”

4. Exploring Win-Win Solutions & Reaching an Agreement

- **“What if we....”**
- **“We could...”**
- **“Maybe we should try to...”**

“I” MESSAGE

Use “I” Message assertive communications as an intervention tool to control behavior problems before acting-out occurs.

1. Tell the person “I have a problem.”

This way you take ownership of the problem without placing blame on the other person(s).

2. Make a “non-threatening” description of the problem or behavior.

It is critical that while describing the problem or behavior that you remain calm and collected.

3. Tell the person(s) how you feel about the problem or behavior.

This serves to make the problem more personal to you and the other person(s) involved.

4. Let Reality be the disciplining agent by asking two questions:

a). “If you continue this behavior, will it make our relationship better or worse?”

b). “Do you want our relationship to get better or worse?”

For Example:

1. “I have a problem.”
2. “I have noticed that you argue with people when they ask you to quit (the problem behavior).”
3. “It makes me feel bad when you do this because if you continue to act in this manner (the problem behavior), I must warn you, you won’t be able to earn all your points.”
4. “If you continue (the problem behavior), will it make our relationship better or worse? Do you want our relationship to get better or worse?”

Conclusion:

People come into contact with conflict on a daily basis. Students can learn that conflict is not necessarily synonymous with anger or violence. Hopefully the various tools in this lesson will give students an array of options to handle conflict.