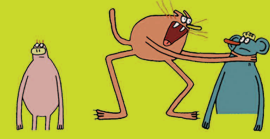


ELBOW ROOM



Teacher's guide and student worksheets

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS: WHAT IS CONFLICT RESOLUTION?

“Conflict style” refers to an individual's typical or preferred approach to the management of interpersonal conflict. Our style is influenced by our cultural and family background and our individual psychology. Some people focus on a competitive approach to conflict—they see the other party as an opponent and seek to WIN the fight, even at the expense of the relationship. An accommodating conflict style seeks the opposite. The accommodator tries to preserve the relationship, even at the expense of losing the fight. Another commonly used style is conflict avoidance. Avoiders retreat from conflict whenever possible; they are not highly committed to achieving their personal goals or preserving the relationship if it means facing or dealing with the conflict.

Effective conflict resolution relies on expanding one's repertoire of responses to conflict to also include a collaborative conflict management style, an approach that considers both the relationship and individual goals as important. Collaborators see conflicts as problems that can be addressed through negotiation and/or other cooperative or WIN/WIN processes, and are prepared to work hard to achieve a mutually satisfactory resolution.

The film *Elbow Room* demonstrates four ways of dealing with conflict: **denial**, **aggression**, **retreat** and **negotiation**. Denial and retreat reflect an AVOIDING style, aggression reflects a COMPETING style and negotiation reflects a COLLABORATIVE style. There is a time and place to use each of these. Constructive conflict resolution relies on “choosing” the right conflict style for the right occasion and not responding to every conflict in exactly the same way.

TEACHING IDEAS FOR GRADES 4–10

Integration into curriculum

This lesson can be integrated into any school curriculum that encourages the development of interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution, communication, listening and reflective thinking. Examples include Guidance and Career Education, Religious Education, Health Education and Family Studies.

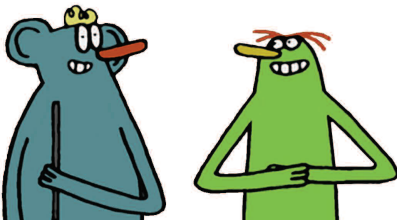
Focus

Avoiding conflict or resorting to aggression usually doesn't solve everyday problems, while learning to negotiate our differences is a strategy that often works.

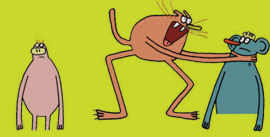
Preparing the classroom for cooperative learning

These activities work best if the classroom climate respects and supports different opinions. Cooperative warm-up activities are recommended to encourage this type of climate. Teachers may need to move desks or rearrange the room to create space for warm-up activities and small or large group discussions. Ground rules may need to be established, such as:

- no putdowns
- no interruptions
- everyone participates in all activities in some way



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Lesson

Duration: 45 minutes

Teacher preparation

- View the film **Elbow Room** with the discussion questions and/or student worksheet (page 4) in hand. Write down your own observations and add any questions/comments not included in discussion or student worksheet.
- Photocopy the worksheet for students.
- Order a DVD projector for the classroom.

Learning objectives

Students will:

1. Identify 4 different reactions to conflict in the film (retreat, denial, aggression, negotiation).
2. Identify their own reaction to specific conflicts in their life.
3. Identify their conflict style.
4. Learn 4 steps to negotiation.

Activities

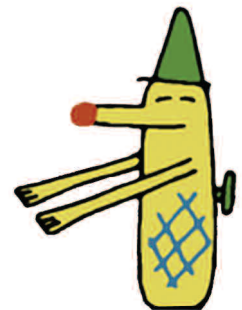
A. Previewing Activity: Space Wars

1. Before showing the film, suggest to the class that people and nations often fight over *territory*. Write SPACE WARS on the board or flip chart and ask students to think of historical or current fights over territory.

Explain that in everyday life, people often fight over territory as well. Ask students to think of situations in their own life where they have had to “share space” with someone else and it turned into a conflict or a fight. Then divide students into pairs and ask them to share the experiences they have had in trying to share space. After a few minutes of sharing, ask students to regroup and share the SPACE WARS that they have experienced. Once several situations are shared verbally (or listed on the board under SPACE WARS), explain that you are going to read off typical responses to territorial conflict and that students are to raise their hands when the response sounds like something that they would do.

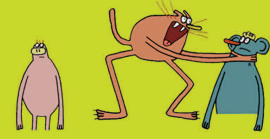
In a conflict over space would you:

- try to ignore the situation?
- start a fight?
- make a joke?
- plot some sneaky revenge?
- call in a parent?
- work out a satisfactory solution?



Then ask students to share which (if any) of the responses helped solve the conflict. Explain that the film **Elbow Room** shows different responses to conflict.

ELBOW ROOM



B. View *ELBOW ROOM*

C. Post-viewing activities

CONFLICT STYLES

After viewing the film, write RETREAT, DENIAL, FIGHTING and NEGOTIATION on the board and ask the class for examples from the film that demonstrate each of these reactions to the conflict.

Suggest that each of us has our own conflict style—our own way of reacting to conflict. Have students fill in the CONFLICT STYLES survey on the worksheet to see if they can identify their own conflict style. (Before assigning the worksheet exercises, you may read over and discuss with the class the four different conflict styles—TURTLE, LION, TEDDY BEAR, OWL—as described on the worksheet.)

NEGOTIATION

After students have completed the worksheet, ask them to share their responses with a classmate. Then ask the class to gather in large group to learn more about OWL-like negotiation or WIN/WIN conflict solving. Write the following steps on the board or flip chart under the heading STEPS TO NEGOTIATION or STEPS TO WIN/WIN CONFLICT SOLVING; otherwise, supply the handout (see appendix) or project it on an overhead.

STEPS TO WIN/WIN CONFLICT SOLVING

1. State clearly what you need or expect.
2. Listen carefully to what the other person needs or expects.
3. Think together of at least three or four ways that everyone can get (most of) what they need.
4. Choose the best option and act on it!

Ask students to choose a partner and to use the STEPS above to role play the scenarios provided in the worksheet “as an OWL would do...”

D. Closing reflections

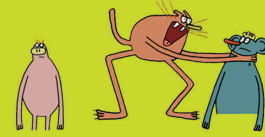
1. Ask students to hand in worksheets and to regroup for a closing discussion. Have students each share one thing they learned from the film and one thing they learned about their own approach to conflict. You may ask students to write a paragraph outlining the advantages to using a negotiation approach to conflict—they could also list some disadvantages.
2. Discuss the following with the class: The OWL style is usually considered to be the best style to use when solving most problems but the other styles are important and useful too. Can you think of situations where it would be better to use a TURTLE, LION or TEDDY BEAR style?

Suggested assessment and evaluation

- Completion of worksheet.
- Participation in previewing activity.
- Participation in large group discussion.
- Evaluation of worksheets and reflective discussion/paragraph to determine if learning objectives were successfully met.



ELBOW ROOM



Name: _____

Worksheet What's your style?

Read the situations below. Decide what you would most likely do and circle *a*, *b*, *c* or *d*. Be as honest as possible!

- You and your brother or sister share a bedroom. He or she is always complaining that you're messy and constantly complains about your clothes not being put away. You're tired of the nagging. What do you do?*
 - Ignore him/her and mutter under your breath.
 - Yell at him/her and throw things around to make the room even messier.
 - Clean the room immediately and make sure you always keep things to his/her standard.
 - Ask him/her to talk to you about how you can both enjoy the space you share.
- You're working beside a classmate who hums softly while she works. No one else seems to hear it, but you find it very difficult to concentrate on your work. What do you do?*
 - When leaving class, tell someone else how annoying the person is.
 - Hit her hard on the arm and tell her to stop singing.
 - Tell her that you like her singing.
 - Ask her to stop.
- You're on a crowded city bus and you have just sat down on the last seat available. An adult with a large briefcase sits beside you. He's not aware that the briefcase is half on your lap; you're uncomfortable and wish that he would remove it. What would you do?*
 - Try to ignore your discomfort by thinking of something else.
 - Constantly bump into him so he moves.
 - Move further over in the seat so that he has more room for his briefcase.
 - Explain how uncomfortable the situation is for you and ask him to move his briefcase.

Analyze your conflict style

Your normal way of handling conflict is called your CONFLICT STYLE. There are four styles most people use:

- A person who always tries to run away from conflict—a TURTLE.
- A person who always FIGHTS when they have a problem—a LION.
- A person who always gives in—a TEDDY BEAR.
- A person who learns to face conflict and uses a WIN/WIN approach without fighting AND without giving in—an OWL.

Are you a TURTLE, LION, TEDDY BEAR or OWL?

- Review your answers circled in the above survey. If you circled “a” to the questions above, you use a TURTLE style, if you circled “b” a LION style, “c” a TEDDY BEAR and “d” an OWL style. Which style do you usually use? Do you use more than one style? Do you use a different style at home than you use at school? If so, why do you think that is the case?

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APPENDIX

STEPS TO WIN/WIN CONFLICT SOLVING

1. State clearly what you need or expect.
2. Listen carefully to what the other person needs or expects.
3. Think together of at least three or four ways that everyone can get (most of) what they need.
4. Choose the best option and act on it!