**(u)** Universal   **(int)** Intermediate

# Decision Making

## ABOUT MORNINGSIDE CENTER

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility's evidence-validated programs engage young people in learning essential social and emotional skills and help educators build productive and respectful schools. The 4Rs Program combines superior children's books with engaging SEL activities that explore community, feelings, relationships, conflict, and problem-solving, adding depth to literacy instruction.

# Conflict, Win Win

By: The 4Rs

# Conflict: Win-Win

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Materials:** agenda on chart paper or chalkboard; chart of "Ways Conflicts Can Turn Out"

Objectives
Students will

- deepen their understanding of the concept of conflict;
- learn various ways in which conflicts can turn out (win-win, win-lose, and lose-lose);
- invent win-win solutions for a conflict by understanding the distinction between positions and needs.

Materials Needed

- agenda on chart paper or the chalkboard
- chart of "Ways Conflicts Can Turn Out"

*Gathering: "If you could go to a peaceful place today, where would you go?"*

Ask the students to talk briefly in pairs, and then give several volunteers a chance to share their peaceful place with the group.

*Check agenda*

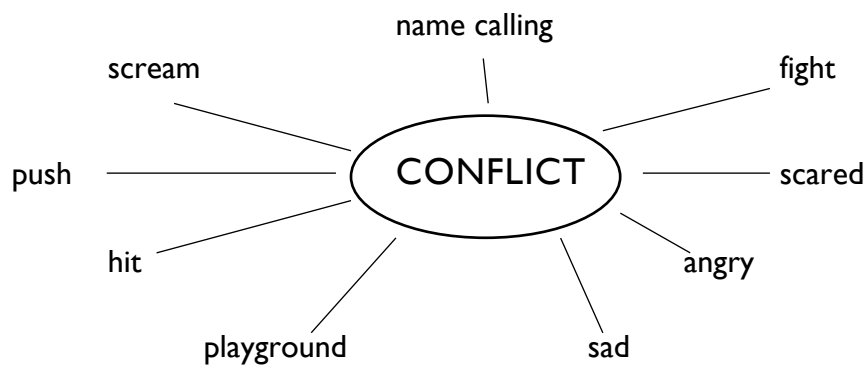Go over the objectives and the agenda.

*Defining "conflict" and distinguishing it from violence*

Write the word conflict in the middle of the chalkboard or a large piece of chart paper.

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What does the word mean? Elicit that it's an argument, a disagreement, a dispute. Ask what conflicts they recall from the story. Then ask the children to say words that come to their minds when they hear the word "conflict." Write the words on the board or chart paper and connect them with lines to the word "conflict" to form a web. Below is a typical "conflict web."

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                        name calling
        scream                              fight


  push  —————————  CONFLICT  —————————  scared


        hit                              angry


              playground        sad
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Ask the children if they have anything they want to say about the web. What do they notice? Most conflict webs, whether made by children or adults, consist primarily of negative words. The children may notice this. If they don't (and if it's true of your web), point it out. Explain that people tend to see conflict as something bad because they tend to link it with violence.

On the chalkboard, write CONFLICT = VIOLENCE and say that many people equate the two. Ask, Does conflict = violence? What's the difference between them? In a conflict, people's needs or wants are clashing in some way. Or they're experiencing strong feelings about a situation or something another person has done. In other words, they are experiencing a problem. That's very different from violence, in which someone deliberately tries to hurt another person or force them to do something that's not good for them to do. Conflict can lead to violence, but it doesn't have to.

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In the 4Rs Program, we're learning skills to deal with conflict in creative, peaceful, nonviolent ways. When you're confident that the class understands the distinction, draw a line through the equals sign (CONFLICT ≠ VIOLENCE) to demonstrate that conflict and violence do not have to go together. When a conflict arises, we have choices; and our choices can be peaceful, nonviolent ones.

There are many kinds of conflicts. Friends can argue over what they want to do together during free time. Classmates can argue over who gets to go first on the computer. Teachers can have conflicts with students. Children can have conflicts with their parents. Large groups of people, including whole countries, can have conflicts with other groups. This is normal. We all have conflicts from time to time. Conflict is part of life.

Ask students to work in pairs, taking a minute or two each to share stories of a recent conflict they were part of or witnessed. After the students have talked in pairs, ask for several volunteers to share their stories with the class. Discuss: What happened? How did the conflict turn out? Were you happy with the way you handled it?

## Win-Win Solutions

Ask the students to work with a partner. Ask each pair to decide who will be "Person A" and who will be "Person B." Explain that you're going to give them a situation to role play. Remind them of the rules: They must not touch each other. And when you clap your hands and say freeze, they stop the action and get quiet.

Present the following situation for the students to role play with their partners:

> Person A is Joanna (or John if a boy is playing the part), a high school student who has a big test tomorrow. She is busy studying when Person B, her sister Emily (or brother Eric, if a boy is playing the

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part), a fifth grader, comes home from school. Emily has just completed taking the city-wide reading tests, and wants to celebrate. She takes out a favorite CD, puts it into the boom box in the living room, turns up the volume full-blast, and starts dancing. Joanna storms out of her room and orders Emily to turn off the music.

Tell the students to begin the role play, and let it run for a minute or two. Then FREEZE the action.

Ask: What happened in your role plays? Students will probably describe a variety of behaviors: almost coming to blows; one or the other sister giving in; a parent getting involved; the sisters beginning to talk out a solution. Accept all of the students' contributions without judgment.

Now tell the students that you want them play the roles of the two sisters once again. But this time they are to put their heads together to come up with a solution that would make both of them happy. They will have one minute to come up with a solution. Have them begin the role play.

When the minute is up, ask the students what solutions they came up with. Chances are various pairs will come up with different solutions, including: Emily putting on ear phones; Joanna going to the library; Emily going to a friends' house; Joanna letting Emily use something special of hers – a computer game, for example – so that Emily can celebrate, but in a quiet way; Emily dancing with the music for an hour, and then finding something quiet to do. There are many possible solutions.

Next, introduce the students to the chart you made that summarizes the Ways Conflicts Can Turn Out. [*See chart at end of lesson.*] Explain (or remind the students) that if the conflict gets resolved so that both people feel good, we call it a win-win solution. If one person gets what s/he wants and the other person doesn't, that's a win-lose or lose-win. Ask the students to describe an outcome for the conflict Joanna and Emily that would be a

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win-lose or a lose-win. If the conflict is resolved so that nobody is happy, that's a lose-lose solution. Ask the students to imagine how it might happen that the conflict between Joanna and Emily would end in a lose-lose situation.

Summarize: As we have seen, you were able to come up with win-win solutions to the conflict between these two sisters. You have illustrated a very important principle of conflict resolution: Sometimes we can solve conflicts so that both people get what they want.

*Positions vs. Needs*

Explain that to find win-win solutions to conflicts, it's helpful to understand about positions and underlying needs. Write the words "underlying need" on the board. Tell the students that in conflict resolution, an underlying need is something basic or important that you want or are hoping for. Now write the word "position" on the board. Explain that a position is a specific way of meeting a need. So, for example, if I'm hungry, I have a need for food. But I can satisfy that need with many different kinds of foods. My need is for food to satisfy my hunger. My position is the specific food I've chosen, for example, fried chicken.

Ask the students to apply these definitions to Joanna and Emily. What was Joanna's need? [Quiet, so that she could study] What was Emily's need? [To celebrate] What was Emily's initial position? [Turning the music up loud and dancing] What was Joanna's initial position? [Turning the music off].

If disputants stay at the level of positions (turning on the music vs. turning off the music), it's hard to imagine a win-win solution. But if we look at underlying needs (Emily's need to celebrate, Joanna's need to concentrate), suddenly many more possibilities open up. For there are many ways to celebrate besides dancing to loud music in the apartment,

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and there are many ways for Joanna to meet her need for quiet concentration besides turning off Emily's music.

A win-win solution is not always possible. But when we get into a conflict, it's good, early on, to ask ourselves the win-win question: Is there any way we can solve this so that both of us can get what we want? To answer that question, we have to understand our own underlying needs and the underlying needs of the other person. Understanding their needs may require us to do some good listening. Putting out our needs may require assertiveness on our part. Once the needs are out on the table, we both have to put our heads together to think up creative solutions. That's where the creative part of creative conflict resolution comes in. It takes work and skill, but often win-win solutions are possible.

*Closing*

Have students give themselves a round of applause for their hard work in solving the conflict.

### Chart: Ways Conflict Can Turn Out

|  | Joanna gets what she needs | Joanna doesn't get what she needs |
|---|---|---|
| Emily gets what she needs | Win-Win | Win-Lose |
| Emily doesn't get what she needs | Lose-Win | Lose-Lose |

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