



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.

Introducing the Concept of Conflict

By: The 4Rs



Introducing the Concept of Conflict

Note to the teacher:

Introducing the Concept of Conflict is an excerpt from The 4Rs™ [Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution] *Teaching Guide for Middle School*, Unit 2, Understanding & Dealing with Feelings, pp 33-35.

Time: 35 minutes

Materials: chalk board or chart paper;
writing and drawing supplies

Conflict Web (10 minutes)

Write the word conflict in the middle of the chalkboard or a large piece of chart paper. 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 students to say words that come to their minds when they hear the word "conflict." This is free association. There are no wrong answers. Write the words on the board or chart paper and connect them with lines to the word "conflict" to form a web. Continue while interest is high. See a typical "conflict web" in its early stage below on page 3.

Ask the students if they have anything they want to say about the web. What do they notice? Most conflict webs, whether made by young people or adults, consist primarily of negative words. The students 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, with people hurting other people. Conflict can lead to violence sometimes, but it doesn't have to, especially if people have the skills we're developing through the 4Rs curriculum.



Introducing the Concept of Conflict

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?

Writing about Conflict (23 minutes)

Once you're sure the class understands the concept, have them do a writing activity. Ask them to **write about a time they had a conflict**. Suggest that their pieces include the following information (not necessarily in this order):

- Who was involved in the conflict?
- Where did it take place?
- How were you feeling? How were other people feeling? How did you and the other people express their feelings?
- What caused the conflict?
- What happened? How did it turn out? Was the conflict resolved?
- Were you happy with the way it came out?

Give the students 20-25 minutes to write; then ask them to share their writing with a partner. After the students have read their pieces to each other in pairs, ask for several volunteers to read their pieces to the group.



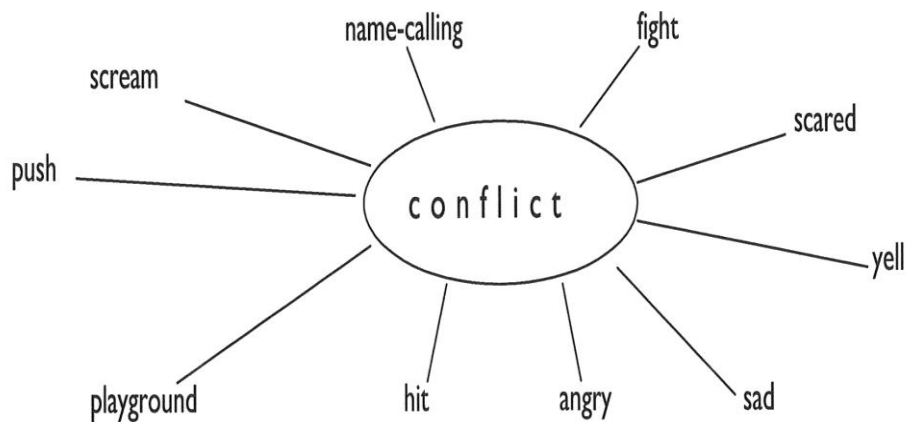
Introducing the Concept of Conflict

Discuss: Was it helpful to write about a conflict? Did writing lead to any insights that will help you deal with this conflict or with a similar conflict in the future?

Evaluation and Closing (2 minutes)

What's one new idea that you're taking away from this lesson? Give several volunteers a chance to share their thoughts.

Note to the teacher: here are some words students might share as you begin your web.



The 4Rs™ Program combines superior children's books with engaging SEL activities that explore community, feelings, relationships, conflict, problem-solving and diversity, and adds depth to literacy instruction.