

Resolving Conflict in Relationships

Upper key stage 2

Learning Intention:

- To resolve differences through negotiation skills by looking at alternatives, making decisions and explaining choices.

Learning Outcome:

- To be able to describe different types of conflict.
- To explain how actions can help and hinder conflict situations.
- To know how to respond in these situations.

Resources:

- Magazine and newspaper pictures of conflict between individuals.
- Paper, pens, crayons.

Teacher Introduction:

Start by saying: Being able to understand conflict, and make things better, is a very important skill for all of us. Conflict can happen in all our relationships, and even with people we don't know. Sometimes it happens between big groups of people, like gangs, or even between countries. It's important that we know what can help us to manage conflict in our lives.

Note: it is important that teachers give safe examples of conflict. Children in the class may have been affected by domestic violence or even be refugees from war zones, and such situations may make it difficult for the child to engage in the lesson. Setting out clear safety boundaries will help teachers to manage children's anxieties and allow safe participation.

Activity 1:

Ask the children what they think the word "conflict" can mean. Scribe their ideas and as a class, decide on a preferred definition, such as "a serious disagreement or argument, that might go on for some time." Ensure that the children can distinguish between personal conflict and international conflicts; it is important that they understand "conflict" can also mean incompatibility.

When the class has decided on its preferred definition, ask the children individually to think of a time when they had conflict with a friend or a member of their family. Give a safe example as a prompt, for instance "remember a time when you and your brother both wanted to play with the same toy" or "I used to have arguments with my mum because she wouldn't let me stay up late."

In pairs, ask the children to take it in turns to tell each other about the conflict they experienced.

Discuss how it made them feel, and how these feelings affected the conflict. Ask the class to feedback on their ideas.

Ask pairs to join together, so the children are now in groups of 4. In these groups, discuss what made the conflicts worse and what made things better.

Ask the groups to feedback to the whole class. Scribe their responses, putting them into two lists: things that helped and things that made things worse. Ask the children if they can see any common themes amongst the two lists.

Also useful for: UE, R, MW

Activity 2:

Using the “things that helped” list as a prompt, ask the class to think of ways to resolve conflict. Make a list of their suggestions, ensuring that they include:

- listening to each other
- walking away
- counting to ten before speaking
- being prepared to admit you are wrong
- saying sorry
- finding help.

Check off any answers that are on both lists. Put these on a “top tips” list for display in the classroom.

Ask the children to think back to the initial activity where they identified different examples of conflict they had experienced.

Ask them to consider whether the “top tips” for resolving conflict would have worked in these situations. Explore those cases where the children say the tips would not have helped.

Also useful for: UE, RR, MW

Activity 3:

Discuss the meaning of each of these words:

- Negotiation (discussion aimed at reaching an agreement, with both sides being prepared to give and take in order to arrive at a settlement)
- Persuasion (using arguments and examples to convince someone that you are right)
- Compromise (an agreement reached after both sides have made concessions)

Ensure that the children have a good understanding of each, reminding them of the “top tips” from activity 2. Explain that you are going to give them a chance to practice these skills in the classroom.

Read out the following scenarios:

1) *Libby, Adam and Sangita are best friends and spend a lot of time together. They are deciding what to do at the weekend. Adam and Sangita want to go ice skating, but Libby is not very good at ice skating and wants to go to the shops. She has already asked her mum to take them and her mum has agreed. Now there is conflict between the friends and Libby’s mum.*

2) *Harvey is a very keen football player and he has been asked to play for his team in a football tournament on Saturday morning. He says he will go and his dad agrees to take him, but then his friend Bill reminds him that they have already got tickets for the cinema. Now there is conflict between Harvey, his dad, and Bill.*

3) *Lucy and her big sister Katie both want to be allowed to go to the shops by themselves. Their mum says that Katie can go now she is 13, but Lucy is still too young and can only go with Katie. Katie says that she wants to go by herself and won't take Lucy with her. Now there is conflict between Lucy, Katie and their mum.*

Divide the children into groups of five and give each group one of the above scenarios. Ask the children to role play the scenario with the aim of arriving at a solution. Three children should play the characters with the other two observing. The observers should note the strategies being used by the characters, and the others should try to note what emotions they think their character is feeling. The observers can stop the role play at any time and offer other suggestions for the 'actors' to try out.

Feed back on the strategies each group used in their role plays. Group them under the headings negotiation, persuasion, and compromise. Scribe a list of useful words and behaviours used for each – for instance, Katie might say “I want to go by myself today because I want to feel grown up, but I promise I will take Lucy with me tomorrow.”

Ask the children to think about why the adults in the scenarios might react differently to the conflicts. Refer back to activity 4 from the topic on reproduction and pregnancy to recap on issues of responsibility for children and how these change as a child grows older.

Also useful for: UE, CF, RR, MW

Plenary:

Remind the children what they have learnt:

- What a conflict is.
- The different types of conflict.
- Emotions that may arise during conflict.
- What factors make the conflict worse.
- How our reaction to conflict might change depending on our age and role.
- Strategies for resolving conflicts.
- Skills and behaviours needed to use those strategies in conflict situations.

Debriefing activity:

Ensure that the children do not have any lingering emotional reactions brought up from the personal conflicts they described.

Reinforce their learning about skills for ending conflict, and encourage them to practice these in their daily lives. Remind the class that these skills are part of growing up and becoming responsible, and praise them for their increasing maturity.

Allow a moment's quiet reflection, then end the session.

Differentiation for SEND:

Children with learning disabilities or who are on the autistic spectrum may struggle with this topic as it requires an understanding of behaviour and emotions which may not be obvious. For example some people may try to resolve conflict or express their unhappiness with a situation through silence or passive-aggression.

Children with SEND may also unwittingly cause conflict through their inability to process social information – for example the autistic child who does not understand the concept of friendly teasing and who “goes too far” in his or her attempts to join in – or through the impact their needs have on others (for example causing jealousy and resentment amongst siblings). Children with special needs may also be vulnerable to bullying and to exploitation, particularly online, where their needs may make it harder for them recognise inappropriate behaviour or where their desire to be accepted makes them take risks that other children would not.

Equally, there are social attitudes towards disability which can make it harder for these children to learn social skills such as conflict management; parents and carers may find it hard to let a child experiment and explore, either because they have become accustomed to providing all aspects of their care, or else because the disability or condition is such a dominant force in the family's life that it overshadows the fact that a child is experiencing normal emotional development.

Working with your school SENCO can be helpful in this and other areas of SRE, as can involving parents, social care and other professionals.

