RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT
Examining Conflicts to Develop Emotional Management Skills

Summary
The resolution of conflict model is a cooperative learning method specifically designed to give students structure to develop empathy and identify and manage emotions through conflict. Students start this structure by identifying the feelings of the participants in a conflict and the reasons for those feelings. Then learners further empathize as they start to look at reactions and their effects, what could and should take place, and potential consequences. Next, they connect and relate their observations to similar situations they may be familiar with in their own lives. They end by making more inferences, evaluating the course of action chosen, identifying alternative solutions, and making generalizations. Ultimately, this empathic structure allows students to grasp how the participants of a conflict are feeling and can help them identify and offer alternatives to managing their own emotions.

Outcome
Problem Solving & Empathy Development

Learning Level
Deep to Transfer Learning

Instructional Difficulty
Intermediate Difficulty

Interaction
Cooperative Discussion to Extend Thinking

Prep: 15 - 45 minutes   Class Time: 90 - 120 minutes
**Start Strong**

The choice of conflict determines the overall effectiveness of this model. It is important to choose a conflict (or let students choose one) that is complex or messy enough that it involves several perspectives with no clear correct resolution. You will also need to provide students with sufficient background information to draw upon throughout the model. If they are unable to list sufficient facts in the first step, it may be necessary to return to or provide more supporting information. Graphic organizers can also help students record thoughts and make sense of the conversations throughout the process. Consider having students create their own graphic organizers as a group on a whiteboard or poster.

**Why it Matters**

Emotional connections to knowledge are an important part of student motivation and academic learning. How we learn is influenced by how we feel. And so, students who are involved in conflicts in which anger determines what they learn and how they perform are at a disadvantage. This strategy helps students learn several critical skills that will increase emotional and social competence and provide the opportunity for increased academic understanding.

**Pair With**

When generating possible solutions, it may be helpful to provide brainstorming guidelines such as IDEO’s 7 Rules of Brainstorming:

1. Defer judgement
2. Encourage wild ideas
3. Build on the ideas of others
4. Stay focused on the topic
5. One conversation at a time
6. Be visual
7. Go for quantity

**CONSIDER THIS**

The emphases of this model are on students’ ability to articulate their own views and see the situation from the perspective of others. They will begin to realize that often others literally have not seen or heard exactly what they have. Also, because of views held previously, others may not interpret what they have seen or heard in the same way. These are complex ideas, even for adults, but they are the foundation of resolving conflicts in a constructive manner.

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**1 List Facts of the Conflict**

- Provide students with a specific conflict and supporting information in the form of articles, videos, charts & graphs, etc. They can also choose their own conflict as a class or group, and find their own supporting information through research.
- In small groups, have students list all the facts pertinent to the conflict, including the major actions of the participants.
- Ensure students rely on facts—not assumptions by referencing the sources.
- Provide a method for students to record relevant facts through their observations or prior research, which they can refer to throughout the process (e.g. whiteboard, graphic organizer, large paper pad, etc.).

**2 Reasons, Feelings, Reasons**

- In groups, have students identify the 1. reasons for the actions, 2. the feelings of participants, and the 3. reasons for those feelings.
- Provide sufficient time for students to discuss each of these separately. If you’re using a worksheet or whiteboard, it may be helpful to break each one into a separate task, box on a graphic organizer, column, etc.
- Encourage students to focus their discussions on looking for an explanation of the “why” behind behaviors and feelings.

**3 Propose Resolutions**

- Provide the learners sufficient time to brainstorm, discuss, and propose potential resolutions then choose the one they think is best and why.
- Have students review and discuss possible effects of the chosen solution.
- Some possible questions to ask:
  - How would that make everyone feel?
  - Why would the people feel that way?
  - Is it possible to be fair to everyone?
- Again, it may be helpful to separate these two tasks to ensure students can develop the most feasible resolution.

**4 Similar Situations**

- Now, give students time to relate this conflict to similar situations they may be familiar with.
- In these similar situations, have the students discuss how the participants felt and why.

**5 Evaluate the Decision**

- Give students time to further evaluate their decision and then look for alternate solutions.
- Give students time to imagine the effects of the action chosen.
- Then give them time to discuss alternate solutions and their impact.

**6 Make Generalizations**

- Have students make generalizations about their observations.
- How might people in similar situations behave?