## The Dynamics of Conflict

**MINI UNIT 1; LESSON 1**

### Objectives

Students will be able to:
- Define conflict
- Examine the positive and negative aspects of conflict
- Distinguish the different types of conflict: intrapersonal, intragroup, interpersonal, intergroup
- Demonstrate that they know what causes conflict and what is at issue in most conflicts

### Materials

- Board/Projector
- Chart paper and markers
- Sentence strips
- Note cards prepared for “What Causes Conflict” team activity
- Student Workbook #89: *Conflict Scenarios*
- Class Reader #81: *The Causes of Conflict*
- Journal

### Word Wall

- Conflict
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Intergroup
- Intragroup
- Resources
- Psychological Needs
- Values

### Instructional Strategies

- Direct Instruction
- Teacher-Guided Practice
- Guided Discussion
- Partner Reading
- Role Play
- Word Wall

### Assessment Opportunities

- Bell Ringer
- Role Play
- Workbook #89
- Journal
- Homework

### Making Connections

The concepts introduced throughout this unit, but especially in this lesson relating to types and causes of conflict, should be shared with the other teachers on your team so that students can be exposed to the vocabulary and concepts in other classes. During the second semester/term, these concepts should continue to be used in students' English and social studies classes. It is also possible to make connections in your team meetings between what is taught in this lesson and the *Pre-Referral Intervention Manual*.

### Before You Teach

Write three Word Wall sentences (p. 5) on the board or on sentence strips. Cover until needed in the lesson.

Create the seven cards needed in the Group Activity on p. 7.

At the end of class, you will assign four students to a role-play activity for tomorrow.
Write answers to the following.

Define conflict.
Write three words you think of when you hear the word “conflict.”

WORD WALL

MOTIVATION

1. Have students share their responses to the “Bell Ringer” activity. Write their responses on the board. Identify Conflict as a new Word Wall Word and post it on the wall.

2. After listing student responses for the Bell Ringer above, ask them which words are positive, which are negative, and which could be considered neutral. (For example, angry, hurt, or sad are negative; solution is positive; disagreement is neutral.) There will probably be many more negative words than positive or neutral. Ask students to list more words in the positive and neutral categories.

Examples: Positive: solution, learning, choices, peaceful
Neutral: disagreement, information, differences, communication

GUIDED DISCUSSION

As you guide discussion, help students understand the following points.

Conflict can have positive value; if handled constructively it can:
• help us learn new and better ways to respond to problems;
• help us build better and more lasting relationships;
• help us learn more about ourselves and others;
• lead to stronger group identity;
• lead to a stronger sense of community;
• lead to better communication.

WORD WALL

TYPES OF CONFLICT

Note: Lead the students to definitions of inter- and intra- through inductive reasoning (have students draw general conclusions from the facts).

1. Introduce these examples: interstate and international to lead students to identify inter- as meaning between

2. Introduce these examples: intramural and intravenous (within the walls of a school, within the veins) to identify intra as meaning within.

   inter: between intra: within

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

3. Given those definitions, introduce Word Wall Words Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Intergroup, Intragroup and post them to the Word Wall.

   Interpersonal conflicts: These are visible to outsiders. They occur between two or more individuals. They can be fights, arguments, or differences of opinion. (Saundra wants to use the car to go to her after-school job, but Saundra’s mother plans to use the car to go grocery shopping. The two are having an interpersonal conflict because they have different needs.)

   Intrapersonal conflicts: These occur within the person, involving decisions that the individual must make about personal goals, use of time, moral questions or decisions, etc. (Someone who feels bad because he knows he should get out and exercise but would rather just watch TV has
an intrapersonal conflict.) We are rarely aware of these conflicts as they are happening in others.

Given these definitions, elicit from the class what *intergroup* and *intragroup* conflicts would be.

**Intergroup conflicts:** These occur between groups, regardless of the size of the groups (classes, teams, communities, nations), as long as they are more or less of equal size. A conflict between two gangs, each representing a different neighborhood, would be an example of an intergroup conflict.

**Intragroup conflicts:** These conflicts occur between individual members of the same group (family, team, club, etc.) A school faculty that is divided over whether students should be allowed off campus at lunchtime is experiencing an intragroup conflict.

**CONFLICT SCENARIOS**

1. Have students read these scenarios (Workbook #89), and respond to the questions that follow each:

   a. Will and Jack were practicing shooting baskets on opposite ends of the gym, without realizing that they were standing almost back to back. Jack was making most of his shots, but Will was missing most of his. When Jack stepped back and bumped into Will, Will’s frustration got the best of him, and he whirled around and punched Jack. Jack couldn’t understand why Will hit him, but his natural response was to hit back.

      • What kind of conflict is this? *(interpersonal and/or intrapersonal)* Students may only see this as an interpersonal conflict. That is okay.
      • What makes it this kind of conflict? *(It’s between two individuals. But it is also within Will; he is upset with himself for missing shots.)*
      • Have students give other examples of this kind of conflict.

      This scenario could be seen as either interpersonal or intrapersonal. It is obviously interpersonal because two people are fighting. But some students may see this as intrapersonal because Will’s frustration is making him angry, and his conflict, which is invisible to us, erupts into an interpersonal conflict.

      If your students see the intrapersonal conflict here, lead a short discussion on how one conflict can cause another conflict, and that the cause of a conflict may be invisible to us. If students notice this, go with it; if no one comments on this possibility, you may not want to introduce it.

      Most conflicts we see on TV, at home, or in school are interpersonal conflicts: they are conflicts that we can see. In contrast, intrapersonal conflicts are not easily observable to others. [We see the sulking, but can only suppose it has an intrapersonal cause.]

   b. A student submitted an article to the school paper that would have embarrassed several students and teachers if it had been printed. Some members of the staff wanted to edit the article so that it wouldn’t be offensive and embarrassing, while others,
including the editor, wanted to run it as written because they believed it was a good article that told the truth.

- What kind of conflict is this? (intragroup)
- Why? (It involves differences of opinion among members of one group.)
- Have students give other examples of this kind of conflict.

This is a complicated conflict to identify, because of all the types of conflict, students have the most difficulty identifying sub-groups within a larger group. In this case, the conflict is due to two points of view within the one group of newspaper staff.

c. Toby and Josh have been friends since elementary school. Now that they’re seniors in high school, they both must pass Advanced Physics in order to graduate. Toby, who isn’t doing well in the class, just found out that Josh has been getting the answers to the tests from his brother who took the class last year and who stole the tests off the teacher’s desk. Josh has offered to share the answers with Toby. Toby knows that what Josh is doing is wrong, but he also knows he must pass the course in order to graduate.

- What kind of conflict is this? (intrapersonal)
- Why? (One person must make a moral decision for himself.)
- Have students give other examples of this kind of conflict.

d. A group of Peruvian students sits at the same table in the cafeteria to eat lunch every day. But yesterday, they got to the cafeteria late, and found a group of students from Scotland at their table. The Scottish students refused to leave, and the Peruvian students feel that they are being disrespected by the Scots. Feelings are getting very tense between the Scots and the Peruvians.

- What kind of conflict is this? (intergroup)
- Why? (Two groups are having a disagreement.)
- Have students give other examples of this kind of conflict.

THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Note: Basic information for the teacher’s background knowledge. Do not introduce these concepts in these words to the students:

Conflict arises over resources, psychological needs, and values. Resources: Things that are needed or wanted (objects, space, time) and over which people vie for possession. Conflict arises when the resource cannot be shared amicably. Sometimes the resource itself is really the cause of the conflict, but often it is only the symbolic cause, and there is a more complex reason for the conflict, either psychological or values-related. (Example: You and your brother want to watch different programs on TV at the same time; there is only one TV set.)

Psychological needs: Power, friendship, participation, and success are some of the psychological needs that people fight over. This kind of conflict is often difficult to resolve because the person causing the conflict doesn’t understand that something other than a resource is the focus of the conflict, or, if he does,
he is unwilling to admit the psychological need that is not being met. It is easier to fight over a desk in class than to admit that one is lonely and wants to sit near the “in” group. (Example: An outsider picks a fight with a member of a school clique; she needs to feel accepted and belong to the group.)

Values: The basic beliefs (religion, politics, values from parents, teachers) that power all of the thinking processes that make us who we are. It is not always necessary to radically change one’s views in order to end this conflict, but it is usually necessary for both sides to acknowledge that there are fundamental differences between them, and be willing to live with each other’s differences. But resolving this kind of conflict on a resources or psychological needs level doesn’t always solve it, and it will resurface in another form later. (Example: A member of your team thinks it’s OK not to do his part and still share the group’s grade; you think everyone should do a fair share of the work.)

1. Introduce these statements, written on sentence strips or the board, but covered until you need them:
   “Give me that pencil.”
   “Can I borrow your notes?”
   “I want to watch the football game.”

2. Introduce Resources, Psychological Needs, and Values as Word Wall words. Ask students:
   • How could each of these statements be the start of a conflict?
   • What is each conflict about?

   Elicit from students that each involves a “thing”—the speaker wants to control the noun—the pencil, the notes, the t.v. set. Another word for things we need is resources.

3. Students turn to Class Reader #81, The Causes of Conflict and read the introduction and “What are Resources?” in a reading partners format.

4. Have student pairs respond to and present answers to the question in the last paragraph: What other resources can cause conflicts between friends, co-workers, and countries?

5. Follow the same procedure as above with these statements.
   “Because I’m your mother and I said so.”
   “If I help her with this project, she’ll think I’m really smart.”
   “I am not going to take second place in this contest—if I work hard enough I know I’ll win.”

6. Elicit from students that each speaker has a need to show who’s boss, to be seen as smart (superior, cool), or to be the best. These are all psychological needs. Make sure your students understand that psychological means “relating to the mind.”

7. Have reading partners read the “Psychological Needs” section of the reading, and respond to the last question in the section as they did above.

8. Follow the same procedure with these statements:
   “Go, Ravens!” [Or Patriots, or Giants, or Bears, or Broncos, or…]
   Alfred E. Neuman for President!
   Sunnis and Shia continue to fight each other in the Iraqi parliament.
Republicans and Democrats in Congress have different ideas about tax relief, while the President waits for a congressional decision.

9. Elicit from students that the attitudes or events described are examples of things people believe strongly in—supporting and believing in a team, or a presidential candidate, or a religious faith. These are **values**.

10. Have reading partners read the **Values** section of the reading, and respond to the last question in the section as they did above.

Many conflicts involve a combination of two of these causes, and sometimes all three. Here is an example of a conflict involving both resources and psychological needs. Students will find it on the back of Reader #82:

Your older sister goes away to college and her room is empty. You and your twin brother have shared a room your entire lives, and you want one of you, either your brother or you, to move out of your room and into your sister’s room. But your mother works at home and her home office and the computer are in the living room. She wants to turn your sister’s room into a real office.

11. Ask students, **What are the resources and psychological needs issues here?**

The resource issue here is that there’s only one room, and two people want it. One psychological need issue is that you have been sharing space with your brother your entire life, and you want to be independent and have your own private space for once. But another issue is that the mother has more power in the family and has the psychological need to “be in charge.”

12. Ask students, **Do you think conflicts in one of these categories can be resolved more easily than others? Which category, and why?**

**Note:** A conflict over resources may be the easiest to resolve, because often it involves a concrete object or thing. However, few conflicts are **only** over resources. Often it seems that a “thing” is what is at issue, when really there are deeper feelings and emotions that are involved: the resource itself is actually less important than the psychological need to control the resource.

A conflict over values will be the most difficult to resolve, because it involves the things we hold most dear, the beliefs that shape our identities and give meaning to our lives.

The following scenario is taken from the social skill Keeping Self Control, which is taught in another unit of this course. If you have already taught Unit 3 (Careers), you are familiar with it and can refer to the work done in that unit; if you have not yet taught Unit 3, alert students that they will see this scenario again soon.

You can either have students turn to Workbook #92 and read the scenario silently, or you can read the scenario to them:

**Scenario:**
You are watching your favorite show on your new 50” plasma screen TV when your older brother comes in, sits down, and begins to watch with you. After a few minutes, your mother calls downstairs that there’s a
phone call for you. You get up and leave the room to answer the call. When you come back a few minutes later, you find that your brother has changed the channel, and he now refuses to switch it back to what you were watching. This leads to a seriously intense discussion between you and your brother.

**ROLE PLAY**

Have students identify the causes of the conflict. Some are:

- **resources**: the big TV; specific time for watching this show
- **psychological needs**: power (control over the remote)
- **values**: this particular show is important to you, so you and your brother can’t “trade” times you can watch.

**GROUP ACTIVITY**

1. When you have finished discussing each category and the scenario with the class, divide the class into up to seven teams by having the class count off from one to seven. Give each team a note card with one of the following phrases on it:

   1. Resources
   2. Psychological Needs
   3. Values
   4. Resources and Psychological Needs
   5. Resources and Values
   6. Psychological Needs and Values
   7. Resources, Psychological Needs, and Values

2. Have each group create a scenario that involves a conflict with only the cause(s) indicated on their card. Have them write a short description of the scenario or skit. Remind them to think of the four types of conflict when they are creating their scenario.

   **Note:** Set clear guidelines at the beginning: no conflict can be used that involves students in this class, or students (or other people) that anyone in this class knows. (You do not want this blowing up into a crisis outside the classroom.)

3. Have each group explain or role play their scenario for the class. Other class members should try to determine the type of conflict and its cause(s) after each team performs.

4. Pair the teams, and have each team be responsible for identifying its partner team’s conflict cause(s). Team A is the specific audience for B, B for A, etc. This is easier with an even number of teams, but can be done with triads also. If you have paired A-B and C-D, then the E-F-G triad can work this way—E identifies F’s conflicts, F identifies G’s, and G identifies E’s.

5. When giving grades for this activity, you might want to consider adding points for acting vs. explaining, and complete and correct conflict identification. Make sure that the causes of conflict in each scenario are correctly and completely identified.
Take a moment to remind students of the three main parts of today’s lesson:

- definition of conflict;
- types of conflict;
- causes of conflict.

Ask if there are any questions, and remind students that they should have a complete set of class notes on these three topics from today’s class. Encourage students to compare their notes with a classmate’s to make sure they are complete, adding anything they may have forgotten or missed.

**PREPARING FOR TOMORROW**

Assign a role play activity to four students to be presented tomorrow: The team will discuss ways that the halls of the academy could be made more attractive. Identify which two students will be responsible for coming up with the ideas, and which two will question the validity of the ideas. The students who question the validity of the ideas must be instructed that their questioning should not criticize the person with the idea, only the idea itself.

**HOMEWORK**

Find an article in a newspaper or magazine that describes some kind of conflict. Attach the article with tape or staples to a sheet of notebook paper. On another sheet of paper, write a brief description of the conflict, including specifics of the situation, the type of conflict, and its cause(s).

**Note:** If students do not have access to newspapers and/or magazines, this will be easier if you bring in some magazines and newspapers from home. Give each student one page from a newspaper (national, international, local news, or sports), not an entire newspaper. There will be a conflict in every news story on the page.

**JOURNAL**

Think of one conflict you have been involved in lately.

- Who are the people involved?
- What kind of conflict is it?
- What are the causes of the conflict?
- Has it been resolved, or is it ongoing?
- How could this conflict be resolved so that the outcomes are positive?
Conflict Scenarios

A. Will and Jack were practicing shooting baskets on opposite ends of the gym, without realizing that they were standing almost back to back. Jack was making most of his shots, but Will was missing most of his. When Jack stepped back and bumped into Will, Will’s frustration got the best of him, and he whirled around and punched Jack. Jack couldn't understand why Will was hitting him, but his natural response was to hit back.

What kind of conflict is this? ___________________________________________
What makes it this kind of conflict?_______________________________________

B. A student submitted an article to the school paper that would have embarrassed several students and teachers if it had been printed. Some members of the staff wanted to edit the article so that it wouldn’t be offensive and embarrassing, while others, including the editor, wanted to run it as written because they believed it was a good article that told the truth.

What kind of conflict is this? ___________________________________________
What makes it this kind of conflict?_______________________________________

C. Toby and Josh have been friends since elementary school. Now that they’re seniors in high school, they both must pass Advanced Physics in order to graduate. Toby, who isn’t doing well in the class, just found out that Josh has been getting the answers to the tests from his brother who took the class last year and who stole the tests off the teacher’s desk. Josh has offered to share the answers with Toby. Toby knows that what Josh is doing is wrong, but he also knows he must pass the course in order to graduate.

What kind of conflict is this? ___________________________________________
What makes it this kind of conflict?_______________________________________

D. A group of Peruvian students sits at the same table in the cafeteria to eat lunch every day. But yesterday, they got to the cafeteria late, and found a group of students from Scotland at their table. The Scottish students refused to leave, and the Peruvian students feel that they are being disrespected by the Scots. Feelings are getting very tense between the Scots and the Peruvians.

What kind of conflict is this? ___________________________________________
What makes it this kind of conflict?_______________________________________
The Causes of Conflict

In all of history, in any story you can think of, in the events in your own life, there are only three things that cause conflict. They are resources, psychological needs, and values.

What are RESOURCES?

A resource is any thing that you need or want or can use, for whatever reason. These things are finite: this means there is a limited amount of the thing you want, so sharing can cause problems—your friend has a candy bar, but if she is going to share it with you, neither of you can have the whole thing. Usually we think of resources as objects, but some resources, such as time, which can’t be held, can also cause conflicts: there is only so much time in a day, and it has to be used carefully, the way other resources are.

Sometimes, the resource itself is the cause of the conflict (“I really want that candy bar.”) but often the resource is just the excuse to start the conflict, and the real cause of the conflict is either psychological needs or values, which are explained below.

Conflicts happen when the resource can’t be shared in a friendly way. For instance, if your friend has that candy bar, and you ask her to share it with you, and she says, “Sure, no problem,” then there’s no conflict. But what happens if she refuses to share it? Suddenly there’s a conflict. Maybe not a fight, but bad feelings, anger, and hurt feelings are bound to happen.

In these paragraphs, a couple of resources have been mentioned—candy bar and time. What other resources can you think of that can cause conflicts between friends, co-workers, countries?

What are PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS?

We all have psychological needs to build our mental health and make us happy with the world around us. We all need friendship, to feel we belong, and a sense of success and power. We may not be able to hold these things, but we sure know when friendship or a feeling of power and belonging are missing. A conflict that happens because of psychological needs can be difficult to resolve because the person causing the conflict might really think it’s the candy bar (resource) she wants, and not the feeling of power (psychological need) that comes along with getting someone to give her what she says she wants.

What other psychological needs (besides friendship, belonging, success, power, admiration) can you name?

What are VALUES?

Values are the basic beliefs and truths that we consider important in our lives. We are taught these values—the importance of family, our religious beliefs, our feelings about our country—in school, at home, at church or synagogue, and by society at large. Conflicts caused by values are usually the most difficult to solve because there often is no middle ground: if you believe in God, and the other person doesn’t, you can’t solve this conflict with a compromise so that you both will sort of believe in God—you either do or you don’t.

What are some of the important values in your life?

What causes of conflict are at work here?

Your older sister goes away to college and her room is empty. You and your twin brother have shared a room your entire lives, and you want one of you to move out of your room and into your sister’s room. But your mother works at home and her home office and the computer are in the living room. She wants to turn your sister’s room into a real office.