

**C O N F L I C T   M A N A G E M E N T   C O U R S E**  
**P A R E N T S   G U I D E**

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Conflict and disputes are facts of life. *Conflict* is the internal feeling we have about a stressful situation with another person. Internal *conflicts* become external *disputes* when we engage the other person in an attempt to resolve the situation and the way we feel.

Most people don't like conflicts and disputes and seek to avoid them at all costs. And yet, some of the greatest achievements in history have resulted from struggles to resolve differences of opinion and perspective. Where would we be if there had not been a dispute over whether the world was flat?

Learning about conflict and disputes can lead to learning from conflict and disputes. The turmoil they create can lead to knowledge and growth, if we so choose. Conflict can be an opportunity when we know how to manage it productively. Among other things, resolving disputes almost always is an opportunity to deepen our relationships and understand our world and the people in it.

Managing internal conflict and resolving external disputes are among the most critical skills we will learn in our lifetimes and pass on to our children.

**THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO ASSIST YOU IN SUPPORTING YOUR CHILDREN  
AS THEY LEARN TO MANAGE CONFLICT AND RESOLVE DISPUTES.**

This guide will do the following:

*Inform you about the objectives and concepts that are included in the 8-lesson course being taught to your children over the Internet in their school.*

*Provide you with methods for supporting their learning, including topics for discussion and activities that integrate the lessons with real-life experiences.*

Note – The synopsis of the scenarios shown in the student lessons is provided so you can discuss it at home, using the names of the characters that appear in the story.

## L E S S O N 1

### Lesson Name

#### ***Three Approaches to Conflict***

### Overview

Students will learn about three approaches to managing conflict and resolving disputes and how each approach can be used either productively or unproductively.

### Topics Covered

- Three traditional approaches to conflict: Soft, Hard and Solve the Problem. Other names for the Solve the Problem approach include Interest based and Principles approach to conflict.
- Examples of ways each approach manifests itself (i.e., avoidance, power struggles, negotiation, etc.).
- The typical outcomes of each approach: win-lose, lose-lose and win-win.
- Recognize positions and interests as a part of conflict.

### Lesson Objectives

- Students will identify three approaches to conflict.
- Students will identify the potential outcomes, advantages and disadvantages of each approach.
- Students will recognize that they have choices when facing conflicts.

### Scenario Overview

Has this ever happened to you? While you are at school, your parents go into your room and look through your things.

Chad is asked to see his Grandpa.

Enrique's grades are not good enough to graduate.

### Discuss with your child

- Discuss specific family/friend conflicts in which someone has used Hard, Soft and Solve the Problem approaches. What was the outcome in each of the different situations?
- Check your stereotypes. With your child, brainstorm a list of words to describe someone who consistently chooses avoidance or power or talking things out. Does the word list reveal a negative attitude toward any of these styles?
- Is there someone your child or family knows who handles conflict and disputes well? What is they do that works so well? How do you feel about this person? Why?

### Activities you can do with your child

- Watch a movie or TV show together and discuss which conflict management approach the characters chose. Does one approach seem to be represented more than others? Why might this be?
- Discuss how things might have turned out differently if a different approach had been chosen.
- Pick a story from the news about an ongoing dispute. Discuss how different approaches to the dispute would affect the outcome.

### Questions to ask

What approach do you most often use in dealing with disputes?

How effective is it?

What approach does your child use? Is there a more productive process?

Go to the PARENTS' MINI-LESSON Lesson 1: ***Three Approaches to Conflict*** to learn more about different ways you can approach conflicts and disputes.

## L E S S O N 2

### Lesson Name

***WIN-WIN Negotiation.***

### Overview

**This lesson shows students how to prepare for and conduct a win-win negotiation session.**

### Topics Covered

- Separating people from problems.
- Managing your ego.
- Think before you act, responding versus reacting.
- Thinking clearly (rationally) when upset.
- Five Steps to win-win solutions<sup>3</sup>

### Lesson Objectives

Students will recognize the elements of preparation for negotiation by:

- Identifying statements that show the speaker is separating people from problems.
- Identifying ways that out-of-control ego interferes with principled negotiation.
- Recognize the importance of thinking before acting.
- Distinguishing between behaviors that are “reactions” to conflict (impulses or habits) and behaviors that are “responses” to conflict (rationally thought-out).
- Identifying the best timing for successful negotiation in different conflict situations.

Students will identify in order the steps of a 5-step negotiation process: 1) gather information, 2) focus on interests, 3) brainstorm options, 4) evaluate what is “doable,” and 5) choose an action.

### Scenario Overview

Lisa responds to her parents’ questions about where she has been.

John was planning to take his sister to zoo.

How does Jim’s respond to bad grades?

### Discuss with your child

- What does it mean to “win” or to “lose”.
- What does it takes to have a win-win attitude.
- What are the typical “reactions” to family conflicts by different family members? What do they say or do to protect their ego? In what ways could they change to “responding” to conflict instead?
- What has the cost been in any family disputes that were approached as win-lose situations?

### Activities you can do with your child

- Have the whole family participate in non-competitive activities, where the object is to play and have fun, not to necessarily win or be the best. (Examples: Decorating for a party, baking, sing-a-longs, arts and crafts projects.)
- Take a traditional game and redefine the rules or the way you play so that the goal is win-win. (Example: Play charades without teams – everybody takes a turn at pantomiming while everyone else guesses.)
- Turn household chores into a “game” where the object is for the family to work as a team and accomplish the task *together*. Everybody wins when the work is done.
- Apply the five win-win negotiating steps to an extremely easy family conflict (like choosing a restaurant or movie). This ensures a successful practice.

### Questions to ask

What is the usual approach to disputes in your family?

What can you do or say to show that you are separating people from problems?

What can you do to tear down any emotional “fronts” that prevent honest negotiating?

Go to the PARENTS MINI-LESSON, Lesson 2: ***WIN-WIN Negotiating*** to learn more about making sure that everyone comes out a winner!

## L E S S O N 3

### Lesson Name

***Filters and Perspectives: You're Always Right, From Where You're Standing.***

### Overview

Students learn about different "filters" that influence our perceptions and actions, and how these filters can cause conflict.

### Topics Covered

- Major Filters that affect our perceptions: Gender, Ethnicity, Age, Appearance, Culture/Class, Jobs/Roles, Cliques, Relationships, Media.
- The relationship between filters, perceptions and actions.
- How filters and perceptions create rumors.
- How understanding filters can help you handle a dispute in a win-win way.

### Lesson Objectives

- Students will recognize fixed and flexible filters and how they influence perceptions and actions.
- Students will become more aware of the ways filters influence their individual perceptions and ways in which they stereotype and generalize.
- Students will identify ways in which filters can cause problems in the first two steps of the negotiation process (1. Gather information; 2. Focus on interests.).
- Students will recognize the role filters play in rumors.

### Scenario Overview

Lisa believes "all guys are jerks."

Dad is not allowing Doug to go to the party.

### Discuss with your child

- What does it mean to be "right." Can we always know the "truth?"
- Consider a family conflict situation and discuss the different perspectives of the people involved. If people in the same family can have such different perspectives, what does that say about people in general? ?
- What's the difference between a filter (or perspective) and a prejudice? .
- Do our filters sometimes blind us to what is really going on in a dispute? Give examples of times this has happened to you.

### Activities you can do with your child

- Take the side of one person in a news event, historical event, or movie. Speak from that character's perspective, and identify which filters are especially strong for that character.
- Have a different person play the role of that same character. Do the filters and perspective change but with different people in the roles?
- Switch hats. Discuss a common dispute in your family but in the role of the "other" person. Talk about what new or different perceptions you may have in the role of the other.

### Questions to ask

Are you able to "see" things from someone else's perspective?

Do you have any filters that keep you from making better decisions in disputes?

Go to the PARENTS' MINI-LESSON, Lesson 3: ***You're Always Right, From Where You're Standing***, to learn more about your own filters, and of those around you.

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## L E S S O N 4

### Lesson Name

*Emotional Management.*

### Overview

Students will learn how emotions lead to actions, and how to think clearly when emotional.

### Topics Covered

- Definitions of different feelings and emotions.
- The sequence in which people process their environments: Event, Thoughts, Feelings, Actions.
- Effective anger management strategies: Look underneath feelings; use positive self-talk; listen.
- How to think clearly when emotional: Separate from others; release your feelings; separate your position from your interest.

### Lesson Objectives

- Students will identify the steps in the sequence by which people process their environments.
- Students will identify three strategies for staying rational while feeling strong emotions.
- Students will distinguish between a rational approach and emotional response to conflict.

### Scenario Overview

Alex wants to throw a plate of food at his brother David during an argument about whose turn it is to do the dishes.

Girl mad because boyfriend did something to cause them to miss an event.

### Discuss with your child

- Situations that make them angry. How do other family members experience anger and the physical awareness that goes along with it?
- What triggers, or events lead up to anger? Talk about your own triggers. What are the signals that come before the angry feelings and/or behavior? What thoughts lead to angry actions?
- What are the behaviors they see on TV or in the movies that DO NOT work in real life for dealing with angry feelings?
- What strategies do you use to calm down when you're angry? What works for your child? What good strategies do you know that other people use?
- Anger is an emotion that comes AFTER another emotion. Pick a common family conflict and identify the emotion that comes first (i.e., embarrassment, betrayal, fear, disappointment, etc.) In the future, identify these feelings along with the feeling of "mad."

### Activities you can do with your child

- Pick a situation that might bring up anger and "practice" it in a role play (just like practicing a fire drill). Take turns using the different strategies and finding language that defuses the anger and helps keep the situation on track.
- Pretend you are on a different planet where there is no such thing as the outward emotion of anger. Practice finding words and actions that convey angry feelings without the usual negative behaviors that go along with anger escalation.
- Agree on a key word or a phrase that the family can use to alert each other to the fact that anyone in the family is beginning to have angry feelings. (Like: "Chocolate Blueberries" or "There's a storm coming" or anything that will help you all to see what is happening and slow down.) When anyone in the family uses that key phrase, everyone take a few moments to slow down the anger process. Everyone take a moment to breathe. Count to ten. Relax your bodies.

### Questions to ask

What triggers your anger response?

What are the red flags that signal your anger is on its way?

Do you know the ways that help you defuse your anger?

Go to the PARENT'S MINI-LESSON, Lesson 4: **Managing Anger** to learn more about effective ways to deal with strong emotions.

## L E S S O N 5

### **Lesson Name**

*Listening Skills.*

### **Overview**

Students will learn why listening is important and how to be an active listener.

### **Topics Covered**

- Good versus Bad Listening.
- “Why you should listen well in conflict situations.
- Active Listening: attentive body language, focus on the speaker, listen to understand (not agree), show you understood.
- Ways to show you understand: repetition, reflection, interest interpretation.

### **Lesson Objectives**

- Students will identify the benefits of listening in a conflict situation.
- Students will identify appropriate repetitions, reflections and interest interpretations of a statement made by another person.

### **Scenario Overview**

A girl believes her mother is not listening when she tries to explain why she missed curfew.

Mom finally hears daughter late because Stephanie’s car broke down.

Girl hits fork on her teeth.

### **Discuss with your child**

- What it really means to be heard, or listened to. How do the members of your family feel when they are heard? How about when they are NOT heard? What did the listener do that made you know you were heard?
- What are the behaviors that keep people from listening? What are some of the ways people can change these counter-productive behaviors?
- Share some of the strategies different family members or friends use to listen effectively, even when they are feeling angry.
- Brainstorm cues or reminders family members can use to remember to utilize their listening skills.

### **Activities you can do with your child**

- Have a family member tell a story. Have one family member be designated the *listener*. They can ask clarifying questions and use their listening skills to better understand the teller. Then, have the *listener* re-tell the story and see how well they were able to recount the same story.
- Have someone in the family tell a short story while the rest of the family listens with their eyes closed. Everyone writes down what the emotions of the story were. Tell a different story while everyone covers their *ears* but watches the teller. Everyone then writes down the facts of the story. Discuss what was missed by the listener in each of the different cases.
- Role play listening while giving attentive body language and listening while doing something else (i.e., cooking or watching TV). In which role play did the speaker really feel heard?

### **Questions to ask**

Do I listen to feelings as well as content when my child tells me something?

When I’m upset, do I listen to understand the other person or listen so I can refute what they’re saying?

Who is the hardest person for me to listen to?

Why?

Go to the PARENT’S MINI-LESSON, Lesson 5: *Listening Skills* to learn more about effective listening strategies.

## L E S S O N 6

### Lesson Name

*Win-Win Communication.*

### Overview

Students will learn the components of communication and how to use them effectively.

### Topics Covered

- What is communication?
- Verbal and Non-verbal communication.
- Aggressive versus Assertive verbal communication.
- Elements of Win-Win Communication: use a neutral tone of voice; talk about feelings; make an "I" Statement, ask open questions.

### Lesson Objectives

- Students will recognize that they are always communicating, and that non-verbal communication sets the tone of an interaction.
- Students will identify the emotions expressed by different types of body language.
- Students will identify the value of "I" statements.
- Students will define aggressive and assertive communication and identify examples of each.
- Students will differentiate between open and closed questions.

### Scenario Overview

Why is Chad more likely to get to a win-win negotiation than Enrique?

### Discuss with your child

- Discuss times when one person thought they were communicating something, but the other person was receiving a very different message. Why does this happen? What kinds of problems does it cause?
- What are some of the differences between assertiveness and aggressiveness? Can you give personal examples?
- How does communicating your feelings help solve problems? Why do people sometimes hesitate to tell what they are feeling? Are there some feelings that are easier to communicate than others? Why?
- In what ways can family members become better communicators?

### Activities you can do with your child

- Make a list of conflict situations in the family (i.e., chores, homework, curfew, etc.) Take turns creating aggressive statements, then assertive statements to address the issue. Which statement is more likely to make the conflict worse?
- Tell a story to the whole family about something that happened to you. Do not use any feeling words, but try to express your emotion in your tone of voice and body language. Have family members write down what feelings they believe you were communicating. Afterwards, tell them the feelings you had and see how close their guesses were. If they were way off, discuss what it was that they saw that made them think you felt a certain way.

### Questions to ask

How well do you communicate with others?

Are you clear and direct?

Do others know exactly what you mean or is there often misunderstanding?

Do you tend to not finish sentences, assuming others will know what you mean?

Or do you sometimes go on and on, overstating your message?

Does your body language say the same thing as your words?

Go to the Parent's Mini LESSON, Lesson 6: **Win-Win Communication**, for more insight into effective communication.

Go the TEACHER'S MINI COURSE, Lesson 6, **Win-Win Communication** ways to go right to the heart of the matter in your next difficult conversation.

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## L E S S O N 7

### Lesson Name

Conflict Resolution Decision Making.

### Overview

Students learn how to use the right tools to make good decisions.

### Topics Covered

- Review of three approaches to conflict: Hard, Soft and “Solve the Problem” (Principled).
- Thinking before you act: what to do when you have time and when you don’t.
- Steps to effective decision-making: Define the problem; Generate alternatives; Evaluate consequences; Select the best option.

### Lesson Objectives

- Students will define the problem in a decision-making situation.
- Students will identify the rules of brainstorming.
- Students will evaluate consequences of different options and pick the most effective option.

### Scenario Overview

John needs to decide between studying for a test and working to earn extra money.

### Discuss with your child

- Share a difficult decision you faced in your life. How did you decide what to do? How well did your decision work out? Would you decide differently today?
- How do you give yourself time to think when you have to make a quick decision under pressure?
- Highlight times that your child has made a good decision. Help him or her remember their feelings at the time, and how they reached their decision. What are the consequences of that decision today? (Note: do not harp on bad decisions made by your child, but discuss it if he or she brings it up.)
- What does it mean when people say, “Not to decide is to decide”? What’s the problem with these kinds of decisions? Can you think of a time when someone you know has decided not to decide?

### Activities you can do with your child

- Choose a very simple family decision (i.e., which movie to watch) and apply the four steps in the decision-making process
- Brainstorm a mechanism for remembering the four steps in decision-making, i.e. an acronym, a silly song, a saying or maxim, etc.
- Have one person identify a decision they wish they could do over again. As a family, apply the four steps of decision-making to come up with a better decision. Is there any way to change the bad decision to the good one?

### Questions to ask

Do I simply “react out of habit to conflicts and disputes in my life” or “respond with conscious choices”?

Go to the PARENT’S MINI LESSON, Lesson 7: **Conflict Resolution Decision-Making** to see how you can gain more control over difficult areas of your life.

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## L E S S O N 8

### Lesson Name

*Lights, Cameras, Action.*

### Overview

Students will plan personalized application for the use of a win-win problem solving approach to their lives and their communities.

### Topics Covered

- Win-win in Action.
- Making a difference.
- Examples of projects and/or activities.
- Outline/Template for planning an action.

### Lesson Objectives

- Identify opportunities for win-win problem solving approaches in student life.
- Identify and design an activity, product or project that applies win-win attitudes, skills and/or information in their lives.
- Develop an action plan to implement the chosen activity.

### Project Examples

- Student Non-Violence Pledges.
- Start a Chapter of S.A.V.E. – Students Against Violence Everywhere.
- Create t-shirts, posters and banners promoting non-violence and peace.
- Hold a Non-Violence Assembly.
- Research causes being promoted by celebrities.
- Create a Kudos Board recognizing student achievements.

### Discuss with your child

- What they (and you) may have discovered by using the principles that you have all learned.
- How has using a win-win approach changed their (and your) lives?
- What it means to take action using the principles they have learned.
- How they can make a difference, even a small one.
- What kinds of projects might they be *excited* about doing.

### Activities you can do with your child

- Practice with each other all of the principles that the family has learned
- Read the “local” or “neighborhood” section of your paper, looking for ways to impact your community.
- Visit different businesses in your neighborhood (grocery store, restaurants, dry cleaners). Talk with the owners about how they handle disputes and what kinds of projects could make an impact.

### Questions to ask

How might you make a concrete contribution to your community concerning conflict and dispute resolution?

Has win-win problem solving made a difference in your life?

How might you pass this along?

Go to the PARENT'S MINI-LESSON, Lesson 8: Lights, Cameras, Action to learn how you can make a difference.