PEER LEADERSHIP

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Anger Management for Teens
- Six Steps for Resolving Conflicts
- What is an “I” Message?
- “I” Message Role Play Activity
- Better Communication by Using “I” Messages Instead of “You” Messages
- What color is conflict?
- Feelings check-in
- Resolution Vocabulary
- Anger Management – A Group Discussion
- Problem Zone
Anger Management for Teens: Conflict Resolution

http://www.myoutofcontrolteen.com/mr-ac.html

How does conflict resolution work?

Most conflict resolution programs follow a series of steps that include:

1. **Setting ground rules.** Agree to work together and set rules such as no name-calling, blaming, yelling or interrupting.

2. **Listening.** Let each person describe their point of view without interruption. The point is to understand what a person wants and why they want it.

3. **Finding common interests.** Establish facts and issues that everyone can agree on and determine what is important to each person.

4. **Brainstorming possible solutions** to the problem. List all options without judging them or feeling that they must be carried out. Try to think of solutions where everyone gains something.

5. **Discussing each person’s view** of the proposed solutions. Negotiate and try to reach a compromise that is acceptable to everyone involved.

6. **Reaching an agreement.** Each person should state his or her interpretation of the agreement. Try writing the agreement down and checking back at a later time to see how it is working.

What you can do?

Learn ways to resolve conflicts peacefully and encourage your friends to do the same. Find out about conflict resolution programs in your school or community. In addition:

- Figure out what methods work for you to control your anger
- Talk to an adult you trust if you feel intensely angry, fearful or anxious.
- Do not carry weapons or associate with people who do. Weapons escalate conflicts and increase the chances of serious harm.
- Avoid or be cautious in places or situations where conflicts tend to arise, such as crowded hallways, bathrooms, or unsupervised places in a school.
- Reject taunts for a fight and find a compromise to a dispute rather than resorting to violence.
- Decide on your options for handling a problem when conflict arises, such as talking the problem out calmly, staying away from certain people, or getting others involved to settle a dispute, such as a teacher, peer mediator, or counselor.
Understand that retaliation (getting back at someone in a violent way) is not an effective way to respond to teasing, insults, rough play, and offensive touching (pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, kicking or hitting).

**What are some ways to deal with anger?**

Some people choose to ignore or bottle up anger, but this approach may actually cause more harm because the root problem is never addressed. Instead, try to manage anger so it can become a more positive emotion.

Here are some ideas:

===> Relax. Breathe deeply from your diaphragm (your belly, not your chest) and slowly repeat a calming word or phrase like "take it easy." Think of relaxing experiences, such as sitting on a beach or walking through a forest.

===> Think positively. Remind yourself that the world is not out to get you, but rather you’re just experiencing some of the rough spots of daily life.

===> Problem-solve. Identify the specific problem that is causing the anger and approach it head-on, even if the problem does not have a quick solution.

===> Communicate with others. Angry people tend to jump to conclusions. Slow down and think carefully about what you want to say. Listen carefully to what the other person is saying. At times, criticism may actually be useful to you.

===> Manage stress. Make sure to set aside personal time to deal with the daily stresses of school, activities, and family. Ideas include:

  - Listening to music
  - Writing in a journal
  - Exercising
  - Meditating
  - Talking about your feelings with someone you trust.

===> Change the scene. Maybe a change of environment would help reduce angry feelings. For example, if your friends are angry frequently and/or make you angry, consider making some new ones who may contribute more to your self-confidence and well-being.
Six Steps for Resolving Conflicts

by Naomi Drew, M.A.
author of Hope and Healing

Company owner Mark Burnes dealt with conflict every day. If it wasn't with vendors and clients, it was with his ex-wife or teen-aged son. Things started to change when Mark began using conflict resolution skills. "I used to add fuel to the fire by getting stuck in my position. Now I take a step back, breathe deep, and listen. The more I do that, the easier it is to solve problems."

Mark learned that conflicts don't need to be volatile and negative. Conflicts can actually lead to increased understanding and creative thinking. It's how we deal with conflict that determines the outcome.

In this era of school and workplace shootings, road rage, airport rage, and even supermarket rage, knowing how to resolve conflicts can save a life. Beyond that, conflict resolution skills can improve relationships and deepen understanding.

A system for resolving conflicts used by families and educators around the country is called The Win/Win Guidelines. Based on methods from diplomacy and counseling, these guidelines were initially developed for use in public schools. The results were so good that teachers, parents, and school administrators began using them in their own lives. Now this system is being used internationally.

Here's how you can use the Win/Win Guidelines for any conflicts that may arise:

Step 1: Cool off.
Conflicts can't be solved in the face of hot emotions. Take a step back, breathe deep, and gain some emotional distance before trying to talk things out. As success coach Natalie Gahrmann says, "When I take the time to breathe and regain my focus I can create the opportunity to choose my response rather than just react. If I try to skip this step, my words are too emotionally loaded."

Take a moment to brainstorm ten things that make you feel better when you're hot under the collar. Consider some of the following: breathing deeply while making a calming statement, looking at the sky, clearing your desk or straightening up, splashing cold water on the face, writing in a journal, or taking a quick walk and then coming back to talk about the problem. Some people need physical release, while others need something quiet and cerebral. Determine what works for you, then use it next time you get angry. Then you'll be ready to go on to the next step.

Step 2: Tell what's bothering you using “I messages.”
"I messages" are a tool for expressing how we feel without attacking or blaming. By starting from "I" we take responsibility for the way we perceive the problem. This is in sharp contrast to "you messages" which put others on the defensive and close doors to communication. A statement like, "You've left the kitchen a mess again! Can't you ever clean up after yourself?" will escalate the conflict. Now take a look at how differently an "I message comes across: "I'm annoyed because I thought we agreed you'd clean up the kitchen after using it. What happened?"
When making “I” statements it’s important to avoid put-downs, guilt-trips, sarcasm, or negative body language. We need to come from a place inside that’s non-combative and willing to compromise. A key credo in conflict resolution is, “It’s us against the problem, not us against each other.” “I messages” enable us to convey this.

**Step 3: Each person restates what they heard the other person say.**
Reflective listening demonstrates that we care enough to hear the other person out, rather than just focusing on our own point of view. It actually fosters empathy. Mark Burnes describes how he used reflective listening the time he walked into the middle of a shouting match between his ex-wife and teen-aged son.

“No sooner had I walked in the door to pick up Randy than he and his mother erupted into battle. In the past I might have shouted for them to stop, only to have been drawn into the fray. Instead I took a deep breath, gathered my thoughts, and chose my words carefully. I calmly asked them each if they could tell me what had happened. Then I reflected back what they said. My willingness to listen helped them listen too. They were actually able to come to a compromise, something I’d never before thought possible.”

**Step 4: Take responsibility.**
In the majority of conflicts, both parties have some degree of responsibility. However, most of us tend blame rather than looking at our own role in the problem. When we take responsibility we shift the conflict into an entirely different gear, one where resolution is possible.

Fifty-two year old Nancy Martin talked about how taking responsibility averted a major falling-out with her husband. “We were getting ready to go to a family gathering, and as usual I was running late. When my husband Bill spotted me puttering around in the living room, he completely lost it. At the sound of his angry voice, I responded defensively, and then we were on our way to an ugly confrontation.

But this time, instead of going into my defensive posture I walked away for a few minutes, took some deep breaths, and got my bearings. When I walked back into the room I was able to hear him out. Bill told me that he was so frustrated at having to wait for me whenever we went out. He also spoke about punctuality as something he highly valued. As I listened to his words a funny thing happened: I realized he was right. I did need to get a handle on my habitual lateness. It was then that I apologized. My husband ended up giving me a hug and thanking me. What might have become a full-blown fight actually turned into a moment of drawing closer.

**Step 5: Brainstorm solutions and come up with one that satisfies both people.**
Resolving conflicts is a creative act. There are many solutions to a single problem. The key is a willingness to seek compromises.

Kindergarten teacher Connie Long describes how her students started having fewer conflicts when they learned how to brainstorm solutions: “My kids were constantly getting into arguments over crayons, erasers, toys, you name it. After introducing peacemaking my students started finding ways to solve the problem instead of just getting stuck in their own positions. For example, when Ronnie and Jamie both grabbed the yellow truck, I took them aside and asked if they could come up with five ways to solve the problem. They thought about it and then suggested taking turns, sharing, getting another truck from the toy chest, doing a different activity, and building a truck together out of Legos. This is the kind of thinking I’m seeing more and more. Brainstorming has opened my children’s mind to new possibilities.
**Step 6: Affirm, forgive, or thank.**

A handshake, hug, or kind word gives closure to the resolution of conflicts. Forgiveness is the highest form of closure. Minister Fredrick Buechner says, “When you forgive somebody . . . you’re spared the dismal corrosion of bitterness and wounded pride. For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each others’ presence.” What a legacy we can leave to our children as we teach and model this.

Just saying thank you at the end of a conflict, or acknowledging the person for working things out sends a message of conciliation and gratitude. We preserve our relationships this way, strengthening our connections and working through problems that arise.

**Conflict resolution has applications in every walk of life.**

As a police officer described: “Knowing conflict resolution has helped me come from a base of understanding no matter who I’m dealing with. Instead of just reacting, I calm myself and listen to what people have to say. If people feel like you understand, they tend to become less volatile.”

A graduate student dealing with room-mate difficulties: “I told my roommate what was on my mind and asked him to do the same. We listened to each others’ point of view. By talking it out we gained empathy toward one another. The resolution came as we began to understand each others feelings.”

A teacher in conflict with a colleague over the use of space: “When I expressed my point of view through “I messages” without placing blame, we were able to come up with a fair solution, a compromise we could both live with.

A mother of a three year-old: In the past, the fiery look in my son’s eyes would put me right over the edge. It would lead to a screaming match, marking the beginning of a very bad day. Now I breathe deeply, make a calming statement, and remind myself not to yell. I use “I messages” too. “You messages” tend to inflame him. For example, if he refuses to dress I might say, "I'll put your clothes right here. As soon as you’re dressed you can have breakfast with us." It’s working; the power struggles are lessening.

A ten year-old boy: My little brother started cutting off the ribbons on my helium balloons. I was furious! Instead of going after him, I went upstairs, cooled off, and came back when I felt calmer. I gave him an “I message: “I’m really upset about what you did to my balloons. You wouldn’t like it if I did that to something of yours!” I said it in a such respectful way my brother was shocked. He said, “I’m really sorry. Would you help me fix them?”

**Reflection:**

Think of your own life. Who are you in conflict with? Imagine applying this system to work things out. Think of the impact on all your relationships. Peace starts with each of us and sometimes we need to take the first step. As Gandhi once said, "We must be the change we wish to see in others.”

http://www.learningpeace.com/pages/LP_04.htm
What is an “I” Message?

An I-message is a way to be strong without being mean (that is, assertive) when you are angry or upset or disappointed with something another person has done. The formula for an I-message is as follows:

I feel _________________________________ (say your feeling)
when you _______________________________ (describe the action)
because ________________________________ (say why the action connects to your feeling)

The "I-message" is different from a "You-message." In a "You-message," you attack the other person, make judgments about him or her, and sometimes even call the person names.

‘I’ MESSAGE ROLE PLAY ACTIVITY

DIRECTIONS

SPEAKER: Be assertive, say “I feel..., I want..., I wish....

LISTENER: Be active, give feedback, clarify for understanding

Go to the feeling level, then to the content level.

SITUATIONS

1. Parent/Child – Parent complains of household chores that haven’t been done.
2. Boy/Girl – Boyfriend calls at last minute and never plans ahead for date.
3. Boy/Girl – Girl is always flirting with other guys in front of her.
4. Coworkers – One person never does their fair share of the work.
5. Friends – Friend tells an untruth to all your other friends.
6. Sisters – Always borrowing clothes and doesn’t return them.

DISCUSSION

What was hard? What did you have to do as a listener, speaker?
**Better Communication by Using I Messages Instead of You Messages**

Most parents start out each conversation with their children with "You...." For instance, how many times today have exchanges been; "you need to stop that behavior" "You never pick up your toys" "You need to do your homework, chores, turn off the TV, smile more, stop eating so much, etc. etc.

It is no wonder that the children stop listening to us. Every time we open our mouth it is to accuse them of something or give instructions or criticism. When anyone, including you and me, feel that someone is going to be critical, our back goes up and we prepare to argue our case.

Starting with an "I" message is more respectful because unlike the "You" message, they don't imply disrespect or criticism. Children are more apt to cooperate if they feel they have some power over finding solutions to the problem, rather than be named as the problem.

**How to do an "I" message**

When you use this method of communication, you are expressing how the behavior makes you feel. It is the behavior that is causing a problem for you, but it is up to the child to decide what to do about it.

1. Describe the behavior which is interfering with you. (just describe, don't blame) "I get worried when it is 3pm and you are not home from playing at Aaron's house. I understood you would be home at 2;30."

2. State your feeling about the consequence the behavior produces for you, "I worry that something might have happened to you."

3. State the consequence and ask for cooperation, "Because I don't know where you are when you are late, you will either have to not go to a friend's house for awhile or call me when you are going to be late. I don't like to be worried, so I am asking you to be more considerate. Please don't be late again without calling.

This is not a win-lose situation. When conflicts are approached in a win-lose way, everyone feels resentful, overpowered and upset. Family relationship communication is a work of cooperation that is in progress and will continue to need work the rest of your life. When we can treat each other with mutual respect and understanding, life runs smoother.

**Mutual Respect is The Goal**

Mutual respect is the basis for happy and productive relationships. Without this mutual respect and consideration, there will be little cooperation and honest communication. Remember it is the behavior that caused problems, and behavior can be changed.

Instead of a win-lose skirmish, aim for a considerate solution that takes in the feelings of all of the participants. Be firm but kind in stating what you need and how the behavior affects you personally.

What Color is Conflict?

Cut up a large quantity of 4x4 construction-paper squares in a wide variety of colors. Be sure to have plenty of red, black, brown, and gray. Ask each student to choose a color or group of colors that she thinks represents conflict. Either in the large group or in smaller groups of five or six, have participants share the colors they chose and why they chose them. (If you split up into smaller groups, come back together at the end and have volunteers share with the whole group which colors they chose and why.)

Feelings Check-In

Pass out markers and 5x8 index cards. Ask each student to write on the card in large letters one word that describes how he or she is feeling right now. Then ask students to hold up their cards and look at the variety of responses. Point out how rare it is for different people to bring the same feelings to an experience or situation. Invite students to share why they wrote down the words that they did.
Resolution Vocabulary

**COMMUNICATE**  
Some conflicts start because people misunderstand each other. Talking things out and explaining might take care of it.

**NEGOTIATE**  
When two or more people decide to work out a conflict themselves, they might follow a set of steps. The steps help them work out the conflict or *negotiate*.

**MEDIATE**  
Sometimes people want to work out a problem but have trouble negotiating. They might ask someone to help them. That person is called a *mediator*. He or she *mediates* the conflict by helping the people work it out. The mediator does not tell the people what to do; he or she helps them decide for themselves.

**ARBITRATE**  
Sometimes a mediator does solve people's problems. Then he or she isn't called a mediator. He or she is called an *arbitrator*. When people ask an arbitrator to help them, they must agree to do whatever the arbitrator suggests.

**LITIGATE**  
When people can't work out their conflict themselves, they may go to a court and have a trial. They hire lawyers and go before a judge. A judge is like an arbitrator. The lawyers try to convince the judge that their client is right. The judge decides who is right according to the law and decides what solution there should be.

**LEGISLATE**  
To legislate is to make something the law or a rule. Some kinds of conflicts cause people to try to change laws or rules so the problem won't happen again.

Anger Management – A Group Discussion

How to Handle Anger-Provoking Situations In this group activity, you will learn how to change the way you handle situations that make you angry by asking members of your group how they would have dealt with the circumstance now that they have learned about anger management. Describe a situation in which you became upset. What happened before, during and after?

What could you have done differently in that situation?

Describe your situation to the group and ask for suggestions on how you could have approached the circumstance differently.

Test out these suggestions the next time you enter an anger-provoking situation. How did these suggestions help you? What would you do differently the next time?

Learning to recognize and face our problems is the best way to reduce stress in our lives. Like most things, problem solving takes practice. Use the steps below to work through a problem that is stressing you out.

1. Write about the problem in your own words. What happened? Who else was involved?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. How did you feel about the problem? (Listen to your feelings in your head and in your body.)
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3. Why do you think you had these feelings?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

4. Have you done anything yet about the problem? If so, what did you do? Did it help? Why or why not?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

5. What can you do now about the problem? In the space below, list as many choices as you can invent.
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

6. For each choice, list the possible outcomes – both good and bad.
   __________________________________________________________
7. Try the best choice and see what happens. After a week, answer these questions again. Were the answers different? Did the solution you chose work?