



The Society for Safe & Caring Schools & Communities  
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# ***Supporting a Safe and Caring School— Assembly Script 9 for Secondary Schools***

## *Resolving Conflicts Peacefully*



### **Note to Principals:**

These scripts are designed to be used in assemblies as introduction to the topics in the Safe and Caring Schools Program. The Principal takes a key role in delivering the message in the assembly.

Please read over each script before implementing. You are welcome to adapt the script to suit your school audience.

# ***Assembly Script 9—Topic 5 Resolving Conflicts Peacefully***

## **Objectives**

This assembly script has the following outcomes:

- to help students understand the reasons for conflict
- to help students recognize different responses to conflict
- to provide teachers with one method of conflict resolution that could be shared with classes

## **Materials Required**

- a sound system for CD of music (optional)
- an overhead projector and screen

## ***Introduction***

As students gather for the assembly an appropriate song may be played to introduce this month's topic. The Principal should welcome and greet the students as usual for assemblies.

The Principal should briefly review any activities that the school had last month to recognize the last topic—Dealing with Bullying

**Say: Throughout this school year we have been talking about and practicing skills to help us build a Safe and Caring School Community. One of the most important ideas that the staff of our school has tried to present is the idea that we can all make choices about how we respond to conflicts. It is our own actions that determine whether we will build up ourselves and our community, or tear each other and our community down. We all know what peace means; but it takes a conscious choice on our part to practice peaceful choices.**

**This month, we are going to look a little more closely at the concept of conflict.**

Using OH 1, go over some of the reasons for conflict.

**Say: Most conflicts are the result of reasons that may not, at first, be noticeable to the persons involved. Conflicts can be the result of misunderstandings, unmet needs or wants, conflicting values and different perspectives or points of view.**

**Say: Before we can successfully respond to conflict, we need to think about the underlying reasons for the conflict. Watch these brief skits that will demonstrate to you some of the common reasons for conflict.**

Using the attached script, have teachers or students act out the scenarios. After each one, be sure to point out the main reason for the conflict.

**Say: Understanding the *WHY* of conflict is an important first step. The next step is to examine *HOW* each of us responds to conflict. For many of us, habits have determined how we respond when we feel threatened or when we want to prove something. Once again, let's watch some examples of different ways of responding to conflict.**

After the presentations, use OH 2, 3 and 4 to go over the different styles of responding to conflict.

**Say: This month, I am asking each of you to become a thinker when you find yourself in conflict, whether it be at home, school, with teachers, family members or peers. Think about the reasons that may underlie the reason for the conflict. Think about how you usually respond to conflict. Think about taking a problem solving approach. Your teachers have some activities for classes that will help you to focus on conflict, your response to it and problem solving approaches to dealing with conflict.**

Use OH 5 to identify steps to resolving conflicts.

**Together, we can learn how to respond to conflict peacefully and cooperatively.**

Thank the students for their attention and close the assembly according to your usual procedures.

## **Conflict Skits**

These roles can be played by two teachers, or two students. If the assembly is large, it might be best to have both characters use a microphone.

### **Conflict Skit #1: Misunderstandings.**

Two characters meet each other. One character is noticeably angry.

**1<sup>st</sup> Person:** Hey, how was your weekend?

**2<sup>nd</sup> Person:** You should know! You ditched me! You told me on Friday that you'd call and we'd go to a movie or something. I waited all weekend for you to get back to me.

*(2<sup>nd</sup> person angrily storms off.)*

**1<sup>st</sup> person:** *(as 2<sup>nd</sup> person leaves)* But...wait...I said I'd call you *IF* I had time to do something. I had to work....wait.....

### **Conflict Skit #2: Unmet Needs or Wants**

One character is the parent and the other is the teenager.

**Teenager:** Hey Dad, I need the car tonight. I'm driving people to the game.

**Parent:** Sorry, but I need the car; I have a meeting tonight.

**Teen:** But, you promised! You said I could have the car on the weekend! I made plans!

**Parent:** Well, sometimes plans have to be changed. And, don't use that tone with me. I can't help it if we only have one vehicle.

*(Both exit in opposite directions.)*

### **Conflict Skit #3: Differing Values or Perspectives**

Two friends are having a discussion.

**1<sup>st</sup> person:** Finally, it's the weekend. Let's make some plans!

**2<sup>nd</sup> person:** I can't do anything—I've got an exam on Monday in math.

**1<sup>st</sup> person:** That's Monday. Today's Saturday. You've got plenty of time. You don't want to waste the best years of your life!

**2<sup>nd</sup> person:** I'm getting ready for the best years—by making sure I've got marks to get into university with a scholarship or two.

**1<sup>st</sup> person:** Well, excuse me. I think I'll go hang out with someone who's less of a loser. See ya!

## ***Ways of Responding to Conflict***

The same characters as in the previous skits should be in these follow-up skits as well to ensure consistency.

### **Response #1 Confrontation**

**2<sup>nd</sup> person:** Hey, look, I'm sorry I got so mad about the weekend. I guess I just misunderstood what you said.

**1<sup>st</sup> person:** (*Loudly*) Yeah, well, tough luck for you. I don't need losers like you for a friend. Next time get your facts straight before you tell me off!

*(Both exit in opposite directions)*

### **Response #2 Avoidance**

**Parent:** Look, I'm sorry about the car thing. It's just really hard when we don't have two vehicles. I'm sorry you missed the game.

*(Parent exits—teen's friend comes in)*

**Teen:** (without making eye contact) It's no big deal. Forget it. I'd rather not talk about it just now.

**Teen:** Man, I hate it when my parents mess up my plans. They are so unreasonable.

**Friend:** Yeah, parents sure know how to make things worse.

*(Teens exit together).*

### **Response #3 Problem-Solving**

**1<sup>st</sup> student:** I want to apologize for what I said. I know how important your school marks are for you.

**2<sup>nd</sup> student:** Thanks, but you're right, too. Sometimes I can get pretty obsessive about it.

**1<sup>st</sup> student:** So, you want to get together for a movie—if we go to the early show you can still get some studying in Saturday night.

**2<sup>nd</sup> students:** Yeah, that would work. I'll see you about seven.

## ***Follow-Up Classroom Activity***

Using the following notes and overhead, teachers could go over with students in their classes the steps to DISARM conflict.

### **The DISARM Approach to resolving conflicts: notes for teachers**

#### **D Define the problem**

- Use reflective listening to make sure you understand the problem.
- Try to determine the underlying reasons for the conflict.
- Acknowledge that a problem exists and commit to solving it. Example, “We can’t seem to agree about who should do this job. Do you want to work it out?”

#### **I Identify alternative solutions**

- Invite those involved to brainstorm many solutions.
- Conflicts can occur because of a “my way or the highway” kind of thinking. Many problems can be solved in numerous ways. The reason for brainstorming as many solutions as possible suggests to those involved that there are many ways to solve a problem, not just “my” way.
- The process of brainstorming is as important to this process as is the choice of the “best” solution. While parties are brainstorming, they are working together, cooperating, demonstrating to themselves that they can get along and are problem solvers.
- By encouraging all parties to propose solutions, we are modeling that we respect each other’s ideas and that people can work together to solve their own problems.

#### **S Select a solution**

- Use a cooperative method to select a solution. The following are some examples:
- Begin by eliminating those suggestions that are least likely to solve the problem until you are left with the best one.
- Choose by looking at the consequences of each solution. (For example, “If we decide that nobody can use the football, then our game is over.”)
- Compromise. (For example, “If we take part of your suggestion and part of my suggestion” or “Let’s try this first and if it doesn’t work, then let’s try.”)
- Ask another party to choose a solution that you are all willing to try.
- Draw straws or toss a coin.

**These first three steps allow us to arrive at a solution for the initial conflict. The next three steps take longer, but give us a chance to evaluate the long term success of the solution.**

## **A Agree on a timeline**

- Try the selected solution for a determined period of time. The time will vary depending on the ages of those involved.
- Make a contract or promise that describes the who, when, where and how of the solution.

## **R Revisit the problem**

- When the agreed-upon time period is up, revisit the problem to see if the solution selected has worked. If it hasn't, begin the process again, identifying possible solutions and choosing another "best solution" to try. If it has worked, celebrate. This will reinforce the new problem-solving way of handling conflict.

## **M Meet regularly to be proactive in problem solving**

- Meet regularly as a family or group to celebrate successes as well as to solve conflicts before they escalate. Having regularly scheduled meetings lets everyone know that the time to solve problems has been set aside because this is important to the health and well-being of the group or family.
- Sometimes we have to agree to disagree while respecting the other person's opinion.

## ***Activities for Student Leadership Groups***

1. Make peaceful conflict resolution a focus throughout the school by making posters reminding students of the steps to peaceful resolution. Posters could also remind students to use problem-solving and compromise rather than aggression to solve conflicts.
2. The student leadership group could sponsor a “Peaceful Solutions” week in the school. Speakers could be invited to talk about agencies in the community that help people to find peaceful solutions to problems.
3. Students may want to investigate the possibility of setting up peer mediation programs to assist students in resolving conflicts peacefully. The *Society for Safe and Caring Schools* has material on class meetings to resolve conflicts and on mediation processes.

# DISARM

- D      *Define* the problem.
- I      *Identify* alternative solutions.
- S      *Select* a solution.
- A      *Agree* on a timeline.
- R      *Revisit* the problem to check progress.
- M      *Meet regularly* to be proactive in problem-solving.

## ***Reasons for Conflict***

### **Misunderstandings**

- **Sometimes we don't hear or perceive all the information accurately.**

### **Unmet Needs or Wants**

- **People are easily frustrated or angered when their needs are not being met.**

### **Differing Values or Different Perspectives**

- **There are many ways to look at a situation, and each person has his/her own set of values by which he/she acts.**

## ***Confrontation***

- **Characteristics of people who use confrontation include:**
- **meeting the conflict head-on;**
- **using aggression and criticism to attack those who**
- **disagree;**
- **arguing, threatening, using put-downs;**
- **being domineering, loud, sarcastic, abusive;**
- **using force or violence;**
- **hiding personal feelings; and**
- **using racial slurs**

# ***Avoidance***

**Characteristics of people who use avoidance include:**

- **being fearful of conflict;**
- **refusing to acknowledge that conflict exists;**
- **avoiding voicing feelings;**
- **going along with others to avoid conflict; and**
- **internalizing anger and resentment and complaining to sympathetic others.**

## ***Problem-Solving***

**Characteristics of people who use problem solving include:**

- **not fearing conflict;**
- **saying what they feel without anger or putdowns**
- **being good listeners, trying to understand others;**
- **being concerned with solutions rather than blaming or winning; and**
- **being willing to compromise and work with others to find solutions.**

## ***Effective Conflict Resolution***

- **Seek first to understand, then to be understood.**
- **Seek to find a win-win solution.**
- **Attack the problem, not the person.**

