
TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION
CONFLICT RESOLUTION - CONT'D**The Conflict Resolution Plan:**

Part 1: **Define the problem.** (*This is done by party no. 1.*) It is very critical how this is stated. Write down or state the problem in specific terms, using these four components:

A. Begin with something positive; an expression of appreciation; a compliment. If possible, relate it to the conflict or complaint, but don't be phony.

For example:

I appreciate your help with the housework yesterday (last week, etc.).

B. Describe the specific behavior that is bothering you; don't be general or vague. (Avoid using absolute terms such as always, never, nothing, etc., "you" statements, and name-calling. Talk about behaviors, NOT persons or attitudes.)

For example: (Vague) You don't seem to care about me any more.

(Specific) Lately you haven't expressed much interest in hearing about my day.

C. Express your feelings; don't assume that your feelings are obvious to the other person (and don't try to make them obvious).

For example: I have the feeling you aren't interested in what I do when you don't ask me how my day was.

D. Admit to your role in the problem (if applicable); recognize that you are at fault, too, and if you are, to what degree. Both parties must accept responsibility in conflict resolution rather than casting blame. If both parties work together, it isn't necessary to accept responsibility falsely.

For example: Maybe I've been too preoccupied with my new computer (school activities, etc.) and haven't been available for conversation..

Be brief when defining the conflict/dispute/problem--get to the point without overelaborating. Talking "about" the problem by counting the number of times, looking for the cause, or asking "why" questions doesn't solve it. These things are not solutions and don't bring solutions. Both parties must be careful not to shift the discussion to the cause of the behavior in order to shift blame or have an excuse.

Avoid sidetracking (changing the subject to something that may or may not be related) during the definition! This puts the focus on something else and doesn't solve the current conflict. Stick with the issue at hand!

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An example of sidetracking:

Party no. 1: I would like for you to be nicer to your brother.

Party no. 2: Since when was he nice to me?

Part 2: **Verbally summarize the feelings for clarification.** (*This is done by party no. 2.*) State the problem the way you understand it, and ask if this is accurate, what the other person meant, etc.

Be careful not to try to read minds during this part. Remain neutral rather than negative in your reply and avoid using any threats, insults, or commands.

For example: You feel like I don't care, don't you?

Part 3: **Look for solutions.** (*This is done by both parties together.*) Negotiate for a win-win solution by:

- a. considering all possible solutions
- b. picking all solutions apart for consequences
- c. offering to change some aspect of your own behavior for a compromise.
- d. offering to help the other party (or requesting his/her help)
- e. being involved in the change or solution.

Behavior change should include mutual agreement and compromise. The best solutions involve some change in both parties (there's more willingness to cooperate if it is not a one-person deal). Party no. 1 should offer his/her help or assistance to party no. 2 for change.

Record solutions in writing; write out agreed-upon behaviors, changes, who will do what, etc. This helps the agreement become a commitment.

Part 4: **End with an expression of love for each other.** (*This is done by both parties, and initiated by party no. 1.*) This is an important part and should not be left out. Even if your feelings have been hurt, accepting some responsibility for your part of the conflict/problem/dispute will provide the means whereby the relationship can continue to grow. Whatever you say, say it with love and sincerity!

Note! If a resolution has not been achieved within a short period (30 minutes or less), put things on hold for a set period of time. Then readdress the problem at a later time. Sessions that go too long have very little chance of mutual resolution.