

Elements of Conflict

Objectives:

- 1) To introduce students to the elements of conflict.

Note:

This activity can be prepared by two students prior to class to be performed in front of the class, or all the students can break into pairs and create their own role plays that they will take turns performing.

There is a Sample Role Play handout which can be used if the students are having trouble creating their own role-play.

Procedure:

- 1) Deliver an overview of the “Elements of Conflict,” covering the following themes.
 - Conflict is a very complex phenomenon.
 - It is sometimes useful to break down conflict into its component parts.
 - This can be helpful because it helps us to focus on expressing clearly the things that are critical, emotional, and maybe non-negotiable, as well as those things that are negotiable or flexible.
- 2) Explain that in order to help understand how these different parts of a conflict fit together and relate to each other it can be helpful to think of conflict as a volcano.
- 3) Hand out the Elements of Conflict Volcano handout.
- 4) Clarify the handout by explaining that above the ground, we only see a small element of the volcano. This reflects the behavior we see in a person during the conflict. Beneath the surface of the earth, we find the bulk of the volcano, full of the real energy of the volcano. This reflects the underlying positions and interests that are fueling the conflict.

If you have prepared a role play with two students:

- 5) Explain that the class will be observing a conflict role-play, to give us a case from which we can begin to understand the elements of conflict. Two volunteers will role-play a conflict that we have developed together. The rest of us will observe the conflict and look for different elements within the conflict. We will then debrief the role-play to identify the elements all together.

Or, ask two students to volunteer to perform the Sample Role Play

- 6) After the role play, either prepared or acted from the Sample Role Play, move to a flipchart with the following written on it.

	Positions	Interests	Feelings	Worldview
Party One				
Party Two				

- 7) As a class, fill in the chart for each of the characters in the role play.
- 8) Have students get into groups of two to develop their own conflict scenario. Explain that we need to show conflict, not resolution. The conflict should be: a) clear; b) realistic; and c) easily demonstrated in 5-10 minutes for the class. The goal of the role play is to show the basic elements of the conflict, with a focus on what each party is demanding (called “positions”) why each person wants what she or he wants, what motivates that person (called “interests”).
- 9) Hand out The Elements of Conflict handout to each student. They should each complete the worksheet for the conflict they and their partner develop.
- 10) Work with the students to clarify the basic background of the scenario, the positions and interests of their characters as well as who will say what. In the demonstration the role players will need to meet and “have a conflict”, and have an opportunity to play out the conflict to a point of escalation.
- 11) Decide why they are meeting. For example, in the case of two teens in conflict over a rumor at school, perhaps they are they running into each other before class.
- 12) The role players need to keep in mind that they need to actually say any information they want the audience to understand—they should not “hide” information, but should naturally convey it during the conflict with the other person, keeping in mind that the goal is to show the critical elements of the conflict (not keep the audience guessing about what is going on).

Name

Date



Handout

Elements of Conflict Overview

FIRST ELEMENT OF CONFLICT: POSITIONS

- Point to the top of the volcano—this is the “position” in conflict. When two people are in conflict and they are asked, “What do you want?” the people in conflict often answer by stating their POSITIONS. *Positions are the things that people want or demand in the conflict.*
- Positions are the “*what*” of a conflict.
- Positions are generally *negotiable* items, like how much money should be paid for a piece of land or where a meeting should be held.

SECOND ELEMENT OF CONFLICT: INTERESTS

- Interests are the things that actually motivate people in the conflict.
- Interests are the *basic human needs that underlie and create positions.*
- Interests are the “*why*” of conflicts.

Illustrate the concept: Like a volcano, many conflicts have the most significant elements, which are the interests, hidden beneath the surface.

One of the critical jobs of a good facilitator, negotiator, mediator or peacemaker is to help people in conflict go *deeper* than positions, and begin talking about INTERESTS.

For example, under the *position* of deserving a raise at work lie the interests of security, safety, and stability.

Under the *position* of demanding an apology lies the *interest* of respect.

THIRD ELEMENT OF CONFLICT: FEELINGS

- *FEELINGS* are also critical to conflict and conflict resolution. If people don’t have strong feelings about an issue or conflict, it is unlikely to be important enough to address or resolve. Feelings can both be useful and difficult when trying to resolve a conflict, and as good facilitators and negotiators, we need to learn to work in emotional situations.
- *Illustrate* that feelings can be thought of as the explosions that erupt from the top of the volcano.

FOURTH ELEMENT OF CONFLICT: WORLDVIEW

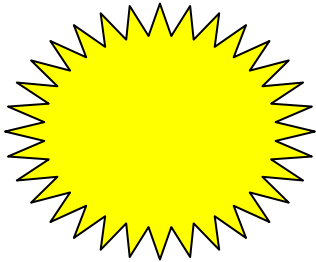
- *WORLDVIEW* is made up of those elements of our culture and ourselves that create a “view of the world” and shape how we view reality. This may include our religion, ethnicity, gender, family history and other social identifiers, as well as personal morals and ethics. Our worldview is essentially how we think the world is or should be. We must also identify and take worldview into consideration whenever we are involved in a negotiation or conflict process. Sometimes worldview is negotiable, but often it is not.
- *Illustrate* that we can think of worldview as the sun that shines on the volcano—its effect is felt but it’s difficult to see it specifically.

Name

Date

Handout

Elements of Conflict Volcano



WORLDVIEW



FEELINGS

POSITIONS

INTERESTS

Name	Date
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The Elements of Conflict

Instructions:

Label each Party with one of the characters in the role play. Fill in the sections for that character with the elements of conflict according to the conflict.

	Positions	Interests	Feelings	Worldview
Party One				
Party Two				

Name

Date



Handout

Sample Role-Play

SCENARIO: [Read by trainer] Shaun and his friends are hanging out at his house. Chris, a guy who lives across the street comes up to the house, angry and talking loudly. He says some stuff from his house is missing, including an MP3 player and an expensive jacket. He thinks Shaun and his friends know something about it. Shaun says he doesn't know anything, but Chris keeps saying he thinks Shaun knows where his things are.

CHRIS [talking to Shaun]

Two days ago, you and your friends were hanging out at my house. Well, today, when I went to get my MP3 player that you were using, it was gone. I also noticed that my new jacket is missing. Now I'm here to find out what happened to my stuff! I think you know what happened.

SHAUN [responding to Chris]

Yeah, we were hanging at your place. And I did use your MP3player. But I didn't take it, and I don't know where your stuff is now.

CHRIS: Well, I saw you holding my MP3 player. And your friend was looking at my jacket. I think you know what happened, and I want my gear back! That stuff was expensive. I trusted you to come into my home, and I didn't think you'd disrespect me like this.

SHAUN: You're the one being disrespectful. Why don't you take this problem somewhere else?