



MANAGING CONFLICT

Intended Audience:

- Adults and youth providing 4-H Club leadership

Learning Objectives:

Club leaders will:

- Be introduced to the nature of conflict
- Become aware of ways to handle difficult or negative behavior
- Recognize how different conflict management strategies fit different situations
- Review a conflict resolution approach

Target Essential Elements:

Successful resolution of conflict contributes to a sense of *belonging* and *mastery*.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Supplies Needed:

Managing Conflict Opinion Line Activity

- Signs (1=Agree Strongly; 2=Agree; 3=Neutral/No Opinion; 4=Disagree; 5=Disagree Strongly)
- Tape to hold signs on wall
- Give opinion line statements as handout in addition to reading them (optional)

Handouts

- Conflict Busters: Helping Teams Manage Conflict brochures A, B, C and D
- Evaluation

BACKGROUND

Today we're going to talk about managing conflict. People have different ideas on handling differences of opinion. Let's see how we feel about conflict with a short activity.

WHAT TO DO

Activity: Managing Conflict Opinion Line

We have signs posted around the room with numbers on them to represent how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement that will be read. There is no right or wrong answer. After a statement is read, stand by the number that describes your feeling.

Statements:

1. The best way for a 4-H club to resolve difference of opinion is to vote on it.
2. Rules help keep conflicts from developing.
3. The club president should play the key role in resolving club conflict.
4. It is always best to avoid conflict



(After each statement, ask for participants to share why they picked those words or number to describe their feelings. Option: Substitute a local "hot issue" for one of the above statements.)

Conflict: Good and Bad

People have different opinions because we each see the world from our own viewpoint. Differences in opinion keep life interesting while providing new ideas and thoughts. Sometimes feeling and thinking differently can lead to a negative situation if people think they are "right" and others are "wrong." Then, it feels like a contest that will only end if there is a clear winner and loser. Unfortunately, bad feelings are usually an outcome of a situation where people want to "win" rather than come to a common understanding or decision.

One of the goals of 4-H is to help youth develop their critical thinking abilities. Considering alternatives by looking at the positive and negative aspects of ideas is important critical thinking. Sometimes, people feel that if they point out a weakness in what someone has said that it will start a conflict. We need to create safe environments where youth and adults can feel emotionally safe to do critical thinking, sharing of thoughts, and working together for the best decisions.

Our time today only allows us to do a very brief overview of conflict. Conflict management and resolution are often studied and practiced for many hours through classes, counseling, reading and thinking. We'll be looking at a set of helpful materials written by Dr. Jacklyn A. Bruce of The Pennsylvania State University that are for youth and adults working with youth.

Do Ahead:

- Tape Opinion Line signs around the room.
- Have supplies and handouts ready.
- Recruit someone to record the reflection discussion to use as an evaluation (optional).

Sources:

- Created by Linda Kustka, Professor Emeritus, Department of Youth Development, UW-Extension.
- Four-part series of Conflict Management brochures, “Conflict Busters: Helping Teams Manage Conflict,” by Jacklyn A. Bruce, Youth Leadership Development, Agricultural & Extension Education, The Pennsylvania State University. Find the brochures at <http://leadership.cas.psu.edu/Tools.html>.
- Trisha Day and Greg Lampe, “Teaching Resources for Youth Educators,” COMMO8, *4-H Youth Development Building Bridges Curriculum*, Department of 4-H Youth Development, UW-Extension.

Let’s look at the nature of conflict in Brochure A, “Conflict Busters: Helping Teams Manage Conflict.” (Note: The brochures can be found at <http://leadership.cas.psu.edu/Tools.html>.) Take note of the definition of conflict. Have any of you seen any of these red flags with people or groups? Chances are that we’ve all witnessed some of them. Can you add any other negative or positive things about conflict?

Ways People Approach Conflict

Let’s look at Brochure B, “Conflict Busters: Helping Teams Manage Conflict,” that describes some negative ways that people might act when they disagree. There are tips for dealing with Sherman Tanks, Snipers, Chronic Complainers, Negativists and Exploders. Have any of you used any of these techniques? Do you have other tips for handling negative behavior that is fostering conflict?

Conflict Management Strategies

Brochure D, “Conflict Busters: Helping Teams Manage Conflict,” describes five management strategies to consider when conflict is developing. We need to think about the situation before deciding which approach is the most fitting. As we go through life, each of us will face situations that are best solved by each of the five styles of collaborating, compromising, accommodating, competing and avoiding.

Resolving the Conflict

After thinking about the conflict situation, the best approach may be to “work it out” among those with differing views. Brochure C, “Conflict Busters: Helping Teams Manage Conflict,” has a five-step approach to resolving conflicts and disagreements. It may take more than one meeting to work through this approach. It’s important to give everyone time to express their thoughts and feeling as you go through these steps.

Closing

4-H Youth Development staff members provide support to 4-H clubs in a variety of ways. If you have a difficult situation developing in your group, talk to us. We have more resources and ideas that can help.

4-H Youth Development Extension staff benefit from your reactions to this session. Your thoughts will also help us know what additional topics we should cover in the future. We appreciate your completing the evaluation.

TALK IT OVER**Reflect:**

- What have you noticed when a possible conflict might be developing?
- What strategy for dealing with difficult people seemed most helpful?

Apply:

- What can we do to avoid being a “difficult” person when we have a different point of view?
- How can these ideas on conflict management be used in your club?

ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY

Enhance:

- If you have more time, expand the discussion of each aspect of conflict management with more in-depth discussion. You can find additional resources in many places. The resources in the web links below are written specifically for youth group audiences.
- An alternative opening activity, “What’s Your Conflict Style?” is on page 76 of “Communication Activities for 4-H Clubs and other Youth Groups,” COMMO7, by Trisha Day and Greg Lampe as part of the *4-H Youth Development Building Bridges Curriculum*, Department of 4-H Youth Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension:
<http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/showcat.asp?id=5152&cto=1>.
- Reflective listening, use of “I messages” and other helpful communication strategies are available in “Teaching Resources for Youth Educators, COMMO8, by Trisha Day and Greg Lampe, as part of the *4-H Youth Development Building Bridges Curriculum*, Department of 4-H Youth Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension:
<http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/showcat.asp?id=5152&cto=1>.

Simplify:

- Consider doing this lesson in two parts: 1. Opening activity, Conflict: Good and Bad, and Ways People Approach Conflict; 2. Conflict Management Strategies and Resolving the Conflict.

EVALUATION

It is important to use an evaluation that is consistent with your teaching objectives. The short evaluation in the handouts can be modified to meet your needs. An alternative to a written evaluation is to record the Reflection discussion under “Talk It Over.” Recruit someone ahead of time to take notes while you are leading the discussion. Remember to share the evaluation results with 4-H Youth Development Extension staff in your county.

ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS

- Jacklyn A. Bruce, “Conflict Busters: Helping Teams Manage Conflict,” Youth Leadership Development, Agricultural & Extension Education, The Pennsylvania State University. The four brochures can be found at:
<http://leadership.cas.psu.edu/Tools.html>.
- Karla Friesenhahn, Cody Stone and the Texas 4-H Leadership Project Team, “Conflict Resolution,” *Putting the Pieces Together, A 4-H Leadership Curriculum/Building Life Skills*, 4-H 11-1, Texas Cooperative Extension, 2004, pages 75-80. This excellent teaching resource is available at:
<http://tcebookstore.org/pubinfo.cfm?pubid=1977>.

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Managing Conflict

Evaluation

1. How useful will this information be to help in resolving differences in your 4-H club?
(Circle one response.)

Very Useful Somewhat Useful Not Sure Not Useful

2. Do you feel better prepared to manage conflict?

Yes No

3. What will you do as a result of this program?