

Lesson 2.3

Practicing Conflict Analysis



Rationale

This activity gives students the opportunity to practice analyzing conflicts using a more in depth process than in Lesson 2.1. Analyzing conflicts enables us to manage them more knowledgeably and accurately. Conflict analysis can be used to understand all types of conflicts—between individuals, communities, and countries.

Objectives

1. To understand the various elements of conflict analysis.
2. To understand the value of conflict analysis in managing conflicts.
3. To develop conflict analysis skills.

Standards

- ◆ Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ◆ Global Connections

Time: Two class periods (Part 1–45 minutes; Part 2–45 minutes)

Materials

- Cross the Line Roles* Handout
- Elements of Conflict* Handout
- Analyzing a Conflict* Worksheet (You will need two copies per group, one for Part 1 and one for Part 2. If possible, save paper by making double-sided copies of the worksheet.)
- Newspaper or news magazine articles (one per group of three). BBC.com and NY Times' Upfront Magazine are good sources. USIP also has brief descriptions of conflicts at www.usip.org.

Preparation

Prior to class, cut the *Cross the Line Roles* into strips, so you have enough strips to give each person in the pairs participating in the activity. The observer in the activity does not get a strip.

**45 minutes****Part 1****Procedures****I. Essential Question**

Why is it important to understand the process of conflict analysis?

II. Motivation/Introduction (25 minutes)

Tell students they are going to practice solving a problem. Conduct the *Cross the Line* activity (see Activity: *Cross the Line* for directions).

III. Teacher Directed/Guided Practice (20 minutes)

1. Ask students what it means to analyze something and what the purpose of analyzing something might be, for example, to understand, to be able to respond, to gain lessons for the future, etc.
2. Distribute the *Elements of Conflict* Handout to each student and review the six elements.
3. Distribute one *Analyzing a Conflict* Handout to each group of three from the *Cross the Line* activity.
4. In their groups, have students answer questions to identify the elements of the conflict they just acted out in *Cross the Line*.
5. Go over the answers as a whole class, having the observer share his/her group's answers.
6. Ask students what conflict styles each group displayed in their situation (relating back to Lesson 2.2).
7. Share that the process of conflict analysis should be used in all types of conflict situations, from personal to international. The analysis is more complex and takes longer for an international conflict, but it is an essential part of trying to figure out what can be done to manage it.

**45 minutes****Part 2****I. Independent Practice (35 minutes)**

1. Distribute a newspaper or news magazine article about an international conflict to each group. Be sure to provide a range of articles, so different types of conflict can be explored. Distribute one *Analyzing a Conflict* Handout to each group.
2. Have students read the articles in their groups and complete the *Analyzing a Conflict* Worksheet together. Students should use the *Elements of Conflict* Handout to help them answer the questions.

3. When all groups are finished, have students summarize their article and share responses. If the article they have does not provide information that allows them to answer all of the questions on the worksheet, have them research the remaining answers for homework.

Alternative: If you have difficulty finding current conflicts for which students have enough background context, you can have them analyze a historical conflict you have studied with them. Analyzing past conflicts is helpful practice, but it serves a different purpose. Analyzing current conflicts helps in figuring out how to approach them. Analyzing past conflicts is useful in determining lessons learned. Students can benefit from both exercises.

II. Discussion (10 minutes)

Lead a discussion using some or all of the following questions:

- ◆ Which questions are harder to answer? Why?
- ◆ What is the value of analyzing a conflict?
- ◆ How can analyzing a conflict help you figure out ways to approach it?
- ◆ Imagine a complicated international conflict like the conflict in Iraq or Afghanistan. How can analyzing the conflict help those who want to build peace in these areas?
- ◆ What might happen if you tried to resolve a conflict without knowing enough about it?

Extension Activity

Show students photographs depicting conflicts and have students identify the level of conflict, i.e. interpersonal, intergroup, intragroup, etc.

Assessment:

Cross the Line participation, *Analyzing Conflict* Worksheet

Lesson 2.3 ACTIVITY: CROSS THE LINE

Rationale

This is a problem-solving exercise that has two key messages. Problem solving is easier to manage when 1) people work cooperatively rather than competitively and 2) parties in conflict trust one another. The exercise deals with a life in prison sentence and provides a short timeframe for finding a solution (three minutes to create a sense of urgency and for participants to feel the stress that conflict can create). You can change the scenario to something more relatable to students, but be sure to include a sense of urgency. The purpose of the exercise is for students to discover that by working together they can find a solution that benefits everyone (a win-win solution). Problem solving here is a negotiation strategy.

Procedures

1. Divide the class into groups of three and have them stand in different places in the room.
2. Ask for one person in each group to be an observer.
3. Have the other two in each group face each other with a line on the floor or a piece of tape dividing them.
4. Provide each student in the pairs with the statements on the *Cross the Line* Handout.
5. Gather those assigned Student 1 and make sure they understand what they are supposed to do. [Tell them they can use any strategy except physical violence to accomplish their task. Do not tell them what the other group's scenario is. If they ask, "Can I share my scenario?" simply reiterate that they can use any strategy other than physical violence. The solution becomes achievable when each party shares their scenarios with the other, or full disclosure, but you do not want to lead students to this; rather, you want them to figure this out on their own.]
6. Do the same with those assigned Student 2.
7. Tell them that they will begin on "Action" and have exactly three minutes to solve the problem.
8. After three minutes, say "Stop" and have all students return to their seats.

Discussion

Lead a class discussion using some or all of the following questions:

1. How many of you were "saved" at the end of three minutes?
2. What strategies did you use to try to solve the problem?
3. Why were some groups unable to solve the problem? What could you have done differently?
5. How many of you shared your problem with the other person?
6. Have one person in the Student 1 role and one person in the Student 2 role read their scenario. What do you notice about the scenarios? (They're exactly the same.) How would sharing your scenario and knowing that you had the same situation have changed how you approached the conflict?
7. How important was it to trust the person on the other side of the line? Do you think you would share information with someone you don't trust?
8. How might the exercise have gone differently if you had tried to work together to find a solution agreeable to both of you (a win-win solution)? What does the game teach about cooperation versus competition?
9. Share with students that in the next lesson they will learn more about ways to approach conflict. Let students know that you will return to this activity shortly.

Note: *The solution is for both people in the pair to cross the line to the other side and to stay on the other side.*

Lesson 2.3 HANDOUT: CROSS THE LINE ROLES

Information for Student 1: You will be sentenced to life in prison in exactly three minutes. Your only chance to escape is if you can get your opponent to cross over to your side and stay there before the time is up. Good luck.

Information for Student 2: You will be sentenced to life in prison in exactly three minutes. Your only chance to escape is if you can get your opponent to cross over to your side and stay there before the time is up. Good luck.

Lesson 2.3 HANDOUT: ELEMENTS OF CONFLICT

ISSUE(S): WHAT IS THE CONFLICT ABOUT?

Conflicts are often about multiple issues at many levels. Conflict analysis must look at all possible causes.

- ◆ Is it about resources (human resources, land, natural resources, possessions)?
- ◆ Is it about power and political control?
- ◆ Is it about emotional needs—fear, respect, recognition, friendship, love?
- ◆ Is it about values and beliefs?
- ◆ Is it about history?

PARTIES: WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT?

Parties can include those who are visible, as well as those behind the scenes.

- ◆ Is it an internal conflict—a conflict with oneself?
- ◆ Is it an interpersonal conflict—a conflict between two or more people?
- ◆ Is it an intergroup conflict—a conflict between two or more groups?
- ◆ Is it an intragroup conflict—a conflict within a group?
- ◆ Is it an international conflict—a conflict between two or more nations?
- ◆ Is it a global conflict—a conflict that affects many people and nations in the world?
- ◆ Outside of the people directly involved in the conflict, who has a stake in the outcome?

RELATIONSHIP: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTIES IN THE CONFLICT?

In some conflicts, the parties know one another and in others they do not. When parties know one another, conflict management includes rebuilding relationships. When parties do not know one another, establishing a relationship means making sure all parties act in good faith.

- ◆ Do the parties have equal power?
- ◆ How well do the parties know each other?
- ◆ How much do the parties rely on each other? Do the actions of one party seriously affect the actions of the other?

HISTORY: WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT?

In conflict, each party has its own story, its own history.

- ◆ How long has the conflict been going on?
- ◆ How often has the conflict come up?
- ◆ How intense is the conflict? Is the conflict life threatening? How does the intensity affect possible solutions to the conflict?

STYLES: HOW HAVE THE PARTIES CHOSEN TO DEAL WITH THE CONFLICT?

Each party may use one or more styles to manage the conflict. It is helpful to identify the styles being used.

- ◆ Confront or compete
- ◆ Accommodate
- ◆ Compromise
- ◆ Problem solve
- ◆ Avoid

MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO MANAGE THE CONFLICT?

It is important to know the impact of prior efforts to manage the conflict.

- ◆ Has this conflict gone on for a long time? What has been the result?
- ◆ Have there been attempts to resolve the conflicts?
- ◆ If so, who made the attempts and what happened? If not, why not?
- ◆ What could be done to resolve the conflict now?

Lesson 2.3 WORKSHEET: ANALYZING A CONFLICT

1. Describe the conflict in one sentence.
2. What type of conflict is it? (internal, interpersonal. . .)
3. **ISSUES:** What are the sources of the conflict? (e.g., resources, values, needs)
4. **PARTIES:** How many parties (different individuals or groups) are involved in the conflict? List them.
5. **RELATIONSHIP:** Describe the relationship among the different parties.
6. **HISTORY:** What is the history of the conflict? How long has the conflict been going on? Is it recurring? How serious is the conflict?
7. **STYLES:** How are the parties currently dealing with the conflict?
8. **MANAGEMENT:** What can the parties do to move toward ending the conflict?