

IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE: CONFLICT CYCLE

Minimum Time Required: 45 minutes

Slide #2: Conflict Cycle Learning Task

As a large group, sort the provided cards into an order representing the steps in the conflict cycle.

- ▶▶ Ask for 7 volunteers (this is a low-risk volunteer opportunity) and give each person a card to hold. Have them line up in front of the group and read the cards out loud one at a time. Once they have read the cards ask the group to decide which order the cards go in. Those holding cards can participate in the process, too.
- ▶▶ Do not tell them if the order they are choosing is correct – allow them figure it out on their own.
- ▶▶ Once the group has decided on an order, compare what they have selected with the next slide.

Slide #3: Dynamics of the Conflict Cycle

- ▶▶ Each step will come up one at a time, so it will be easy to compare the steps with the group cards.
- ▶▶ This order represents the commonly accepted order for steps in the conflict cycle.

Slide #4: Video – The Breakfast Club

Tell the group they will be watching a short clip from the Breakfast Club. Ask them to identify the steps of the conflict cycle as they play out in the video.

Slide #5: Dynamics of the Conflict Cycle Revisited

- ▶▶ Allow the group to come up with the answers / examples from the clip and each step:

- ▶▶ A stressful event occurs – most likely Saturday morning detention was enough to trigger the negative thoughts and beliefs.
- ▶▶ Student's negative thoughts trigger feelings – adults don't care about me, school is stupid, etc.
- ▶▶ Student's feelings drive inappropriate behavior – “Eat my shorts” (said under his breath).
- ▶▶ Inappropriate behavior incites adults – remember, feelings are okay – it's what we do with them that makes the difference (next step...).
- ▶▶ Adults pick up student's feelings and mirror those inappropriate behaviors – and the cycle escalates up and up and up.
- ▶▶ Negative adult reactions increase student's escalating stress – gets angrier, continues to act out, increases the consequences.
- ▶▶ Students may lose the “battle” but the war is won – See, I told you adults don't care / this is a waste of time, etc.

Slide #6: The Impact

- ▶▶ Ask each question to the large group and wait for group members to respond – this is about them thinking about the impact not telling them what it could be.
- ▶▶ Answers should reinforce the impact on everyone involved and the ripples that go out to the entire community.

Slide #7: Haim Ginott Quote

It's my personal approach that creates the climate – this is about adult behavior. What step presents the opportunity for the adult to change the outcome? Answer – adults

mirror the inappropriate behaviors. Adult reactions to student behavior can increase or decrease a situation – it's all in our approach.

Slide #8: Who's Evolved?

Remember the scene from Night in the Museum, when the main character gets into a slapping fight with the monkey and Teddy Roosevelt has to step in and as, "Who's evolved here?". Same idea – as the adult, we need to remember that we are the ones who are evolved and not let ourselves get drawn into the conflict cycle. As adults – the ones who are evolved - we have the power to break the cycle before it escalates.

Slide #9: Underlying Needs

Interesting connection... if we look at conflicts almost every one arise from unmet needs – needs for belonging, power, freedom and fun.

Slide #10: Basic Psychological Needs

Share this information on the 4 needs, and ask the big question – **"Where have we seen these needs before?"**

Slide #11: Conflict and the Circle

The Circle of Courage represents the 4 seeds of conflict almost exactly –

Belonging → Belonging

Power → Mastery

Freedom → Independence

Fun → Generosity (a bit of a stretch, but a case can be made)

- ▶▶ The learning? If we teach the skills and provide opportunities for these needs to be met (if we create the climate) we will see conflict arise much less often and have to spend much less time on resolving these conflicts or dealing with the negative impacts.
- ▶▶ Remember, if we "create the climate" by taking care of basic needs we spend less time "fixing the problem."

Slide #12: The Conflict Cycle – Take Two

How would a response from the teacher that honors the Circle of Courage / Resiliency / School Connectedness result in different impacts on the teacher, the student and the school community?

Ask the question and facilitate a discussion – when we respond in a safe & respectful way, we create positive impacts on everyone involved.

Slide #13: Haim Ginott Quote

In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

This is adult work.