

UNIT 3: Understanding & Respecting Others, Becoming a Better Listener

Introduction

Therapists call it “listening with the third ear”; folk adages warn that children “learn from what you do, not what you say,” or that “Actions speak louder than words”; Native Americans urge that we not judge another until we have walked in that person’s moccasins. No matter how you say it, the message is clear. Communication is more than one person speaking and another listening. Two people may hear the same words, but each understands them through filters of culture and experience. In addition, tone of voice, body language, what is said or not said, give information about what people are thinking and feeling.

The ability to listen well and to understand another person’s point of view is crucial to conflict resolution. In any human interaction (and, by extension, any conflict) each person has his or her own point of view. I can like chocolate ice cream and you can like vanilla, but if my point of view is that people who like vanilla have no taste we could end up in conflict. Many people make the mistake of thinking that their point of view is the norm and therefore, that the solution to any conflict with another will involve that person or group coming around to their point of view. In fact, if there is a solution, it lies in finding common ground, not in changing deeply held beliefs or cultural conditioning.

Before we can understand another’s point of view, we must be good listeners. A good listener takes in information, interprets it, draws conclusions about what the person is saying, and uses all this to try to understand what is going on. Being able to put one’s own mind into another’s as much as possible makes for better listening. The better the listening, the more accurate the analysis and the more useful the response.

One could argue that listening well to people is the key to conflict resolution. In our own era, we have seen the Truth Commissions in South Africa, where victims of apartheid are able to tell their stories. Their pain and losses cannot be undone, but the government hopes that by promoting

GOOD LISTENING

- shows respect for (and interest in) the other person
- helps avoid misunderstanding
- helps clear up misunderstandings if they occur
- gives us important information about how the other person is thinking and feeling
- can help defuse anger
- can help us develop and improve our thinking

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

- blaming the other person
- using put-downs
- ignoring the other person’s concerns
- offering solutions too early
- not taking the other person’s concerns seriously
- thinking only of our own ideas
- interrupting

the telling of stories and good listening, it can help heal the nation’s wounds and reduce the desire for vengeance.

Listening is a skill that can be learned. We assume not only that good listening is essential in dealing well with conflict, but that we can all improve our skills and become better listeners. Although listening is part of every unit, it is the special focus of this unit. Students at all grade levels practice a set of skills called “active listening.” Active listening has three main components: paying good attention, providing gentle encouragement (to the speaker), and restating or reflecting to the speaker what we’ve heard (to show our interest and check our understanding).

We also help students to understand the concept of point of view and its relationship to literature and to conflict resolution. It is because each of us has our own point of view that good listening is so critical. We can’t assume that others see things as we do. If we truly want to respect other people, we often have to work hard to understand where they’re coming from.

<p>GOOD LISTENING CHECKLIST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive body language • eye contact • no interrupting
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In this unit

	Ideas	Skills
Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories have characters • One character can tell the story (first-person narration) • Sometimes we can use stories to understand our own lives • Writers can use rhymes and repetition to make the story interesting • Words and pictures together can tell a story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicting • Identifying the main idea • Asking questions • Expressing ideas clearly • Providing evidence to back up one’s assertions • Listening
Conflict Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening is a key to solving conflicts • Listening can help us be less angry • Listening can help us think better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening well • Using words to communicate with others • Taking initiative • Developing positive body language

The Pain and the Great One, by Judy Blume, illustrated by Irene Trivas

SUMMARY

This book is really two in one. First we read about the Pain, a six-year-old boy who, according to his third-grade sister, gets to do whatever he wants and is their parents' favorite. She complains that he won't get out of bed in the morning and has to be carried into the kitchen, as well as helped to dress. When she tries to leave without him, he cries and their mother yells at her. The parents ooh and aah over his schoolwork, let him have dessert even if he hasn't finished the main course, and don't seem to be upset when he makes messes. When she complains that he shouldn't stay up as late as she does, they agree and put him to bed. But the evening is not as exciting as she had hoped; the parents do not pay attention to her. She decides to go to bed, because "without the Pain / There's nothing to do! Remember that tomorrow," her mother says. Nevertheless, the next day brings another litany of grievances, until she ends with the plaint, "I think they love him better than me."

In the next section, entitled "The Great One," we get the brother's point of view. He thinks she's a "jerk" who considers herself superior just because she can do so many more things than he can, such as use the telephone, open the cat food, hold a baby cousin, and play the piano. He resents her having friends over to play with blocks, which occasionally he knocks down in his capacity as garbage man. The parents agree that he should have the blocks to himself for a while. He builds a whole country, but "it's not the funnest thing / To play blocks alone. . . . 'Remember that tomorrow,'" says his mother. At the beach, his resentment over his sister's ability to swim and dive boils over when she calls him a baby because he's scared to put his face in the water. The conflict quickly escalates as he spits water at her, pulls her hair, and even pinches her "sometimes" in response to the name-calling. His last thought is, "I think they love her better than me."

COMMENT

The humorous drawings and the easy-to-read text written as a prose poem draw the reader into a story of sibling rivalry that reflects universal experiences of misunderstanding and feeling misunderstood. We can ask what would happen if the characters ever actually listened to each other. We can look at how each one escalates conflicts. The parents are accommodating and understanding, but seem to yell a lot; and although they are aware of the sibling bond that ties the Pain and the Great One, they do nothing to encourage communication. Instead, they agree to let each child engage in a favorite activity alone, then count on the resulting boredom to bring the children closer together. Where some parents might try to spend time alone with each child in order to allay jealousy, they are content with crisis management. We can ask if their strategies are good ones and what else they could do? We can notice how the author describes the same situation from different perspectives and

encourage the students to do the same. We can note the way that the sentences are laid out like a prose poem rather than a straight narrative. We can note the parallel structures and themes of the text.

Book Talk

READ ALOUD

Previewing the book

Look at the cover of the book. Ask the students to tell everything they notice about the drawing. What do they think the book will be about? Who are the main characters? Can they guess which character is which? Read the dedication. What does this tell us? Has anyone read other books by this author?

Reading and responding to the text

Read the story.

After reading the story, ask the students to pair up and talk about the book. What interests them? What questions do they have? Ask students to share their questions and comments with the class. Encourage as much class participation as possible by asking questions such as, “Do the rest of you agree or disagree with _____?” If others want to respond to a comment from one student, suggest that they restate in their own words what the child has said, then give their opinion and their reasons.

Deepening the students’ understanding of the book

Ask if the students have noticed anything about the way the words are placed on the page? This book is written like a prose poem, a poem that does not rhyme and that uses regular sentences. What reasons could the author have for using this form?

Introduce the idea that this book describes several conflicts. Say that a conflict is a disagreement, argument, or fight. Conflicts often start out small and build up. One person says something. The other person gets mad and says something back. The first person gets even madder and says or does something that makes the conflict worse. In this book there are many places where something starts out as a small irritation and builds to a bigger conflict. Say that you will read the book again and this time you want the students to notice all the places where the conflicts get worse, or escalate.

For example, on p. 3, the brother is slow to get dressed and his sister wants to catch the bus. She walks out, evoking cries from the brother. This makes her mother yell at her. Now she is even madder at her brother. Have students lived through scenes like this with siblings or friends? Can they describe the back and forth reactions that escalate the conflict?

The narrator escalates her grievances in her own mind, continuing to be irritated by his table manners, his bathing habits, and his bedtime. Has anyone ever had the experience of holding feelings in and then having them build up and come out in an angry way?

Part of the narrator's point of view is that her parents "love him better than me." Do the students think this is true? Why? Why not? Ask for evidence from the book.

After p. 15, we get the brother's point of view. He, too, has a long list of complaints. One, on p. 21, is, "My sister thinks she's so great / Just because she can / Remember phone numbers. And when she dials / She never gets / The wrong person." Does anyone remember a time when they had trouble dialing a phone number? What was it like?

On p. 29, we see the conflict escalating: "Which is why / I have to spit water at her / And pull her hair / And even pinch her sometimes." Is it true that he *has* to do these things to her? Why? Why not?

He also thinks, "they love her better than me." Do the students think this is true?

Ask, what are some of the big ideas this book deals with? What are things this story seems to be saying that are important to you? What do we think the author was trying to do in this book? Draw out the students' ideas. Bring up the idea that the author appears to be saying that people have conflicts when they have different points of view. Explore this idea with the students. Do they agree that brothers and sisters or close friends have different points of view? Is conflict, therefore, inevitable? Can they or their parents do anything to deal better with the conflicts?

Make a T-chart and put Pain in one column and Great One in another. List aspects of each character's point of view (mad at brother for messing up bathroom, mad at sister for being allowed to hold the baby).

Students may notice that in the family portrayed in the book, mornings are tough. As the sister worries about missing the bus, she raises what is already a high-tension situation by trying to leave without her brother. Later, although the conflicts are not described, we see escalating behavior as the brother makes noise while his sister is on the phone and drives into her construction when she is using building blocks. He is fearful of the water, she teases him, and he retaliates by spitting water at her, pulling her hair, and pinching her. There are other situations that are conflicts waiting to happen, such as at the dinner table, around child care of the cousin, and feeding the cat.

Ask the class for suggestions of things the brother and sister could do to de-escalate the conflicts. Is there anything the parents could have done?

Connecting the book to students' lives

Discussion: It's very common for people to feel that somebody else is getting all the attention from a parent or teacher or another student. Have you ever felt that somebody else was getting attention you wanted? This person may have been older or younger than you. Pair up and tell your partner about how you felt about this person. Now think about what that person's point of view might have been. Tell that point of view to your partner.

Have you ever had a conflict with an older or younger person? Describe the conflict to your partner. Did the conflict escalate? Can you describe how it escalated? Can you think of something you could have done to de-escalate it? Can you think of something you wish the other person had done to de-escalate the conflict?

Writing: Ask the class to write in their own words one scene in the book. However, change the scene so that the brother and sister prevent or work out a conflict.

Review the elements of dialogue in writing (two or more people talking to each other) and ask each student to write a dialogue for two or three people who are having a conflict over something silly and don't listen to each other as they escalate the conflict. They can make it funny. Ask students to share their dialogues if they wish and break them into groups to act them out in front of the class. What did the class learn about conflict? Who was "right"?

The book we just read was a prose poem. We can make prose poems by taking vivid sentences and rearranging them on a page. Ask students to write a sentence about a conflict they had with a sibling or friend. Ask for volunteers to read their sentences. Arrange the words on the chalkboard so that it looks like a poem. Then ask the other students to do the same with their sentence. For example, "My brother always wants to ride my bike and this time I let him and he scraped the bright blue paint."

My brother
always
wants to ride
my bike

and this time
I let him

and he scraped
the bright blue
paint.

ROLE-PLAY

Divide the class into groups of three or four and ask them to act out two scenes from the book—one from the point of view of the brother and the other from the point of view of the sister. Present the scenes to the class.

Applied Learning

CONFLICT RESOLUTION LESSONS

Lesson #1

Objectives

Students will

- learn and practice a simple classroom ritual for good listening;
- identify the “three Ps” of Active Listening;
- practice the first “P”: paying good attention;
- practice the second “P”: providing gentle encouragement.

Materials Needed

- agenda on chart paper or the chalkboard

Gathering: Go-Round

What’s your favorite color? Each child takes a turn to answer this question in the following way: “My name is _____ and my favorite color is _____.”

When everyone takes a turn speaking, we call it a “go-round.” Go-rounds should be used sparingly, because children tend to get restless waiting for all of their classmates to speak. Make sure the question you use for a go-round calls for a short, simple answer. Tell the children that they can pass if they want to.

Take the opportunity of today’s go-round to introduce a simple classroom ritual for talking and listening and give the children a chance to practice it. You can use an object like a Hugg-A-Planet or a “talking stick.” The child who is speaking holds the object. Only the child holding it can speak, while all of the others give that child their full attention.

Check agenda

Go over the objectives and the agenda.

Introduction to Active Listening: The Three Ps

Remind the children that listening is an important skill in dealing with conflict. Many unnecessary conflicts can be avoided if people listen well, treat each other with respect, and try to understand where the other person is coming from. When we have a conflict, listening is one of the best ways to work toward a solution. We are listening all time—we listen to television, to noise on the street, to people talking. One of our goals in this class is to learn and practice a special kind of listening called “active listening.” To help the children remember the sets of skills that make up active listening, we can say that it consists of

The Three Ps:
Paying good attention
Providing gentle encouragement
Paraphrasing and reflecting back what we hear

By practicing the Three Ps, we show respect for the other person, we can learn from them, we can understand where they are coming from.

The First P: Paying Good Attention

Say that in this activity, we’ll review “Good and Poor Listening” (Unit 1, page 10) and create lists of listening Dos and Don’ts. We’ll focus especially on the “First P,” paying good attention.

Ask for a volunteer to come up and talk about something s/he likes to do. Model paying good attention and ask the children to watch you closely. After the child is done talking, ask the children to identify specific behaviors of yours that represented paying good attention (for example, you were facing the child, you sat down so you were more on his level, you had a smile on your face, you looked right at him). Record those behaviors on a T-chart under Good Listening Dos.

Then with an imaginary child in the chair, act out a number of poor listening behaviors (for example, a frown on your face, looking at your watch, moving around in your chair). Ask the children to identify these negative behaviors and record them on the T-chart as Listening Don’ts.

Then reverse roles: ask a child to come up and demonstrate paying good attention while you tell about something you like to do. Ask the class to notice the behaviors the child used.

Then have a child to come up and demonstrate poor listening behaviors while you talk. Ask the children to identify those behaviors.

Finally, ask the children to pair up. One child speaks about something s/he likes to do on the weekend for one minute while the other child gives good attention (by showing good listening behaviors). Then they switch roles and repeat the activity.

Afterward, discuss: how did it feel when someone paid good attention to you? How was it to be the listener? Easy? Difficult? All of us, whether adults or children, need reminders to keep our listening at its best. So give the children ample opportunities to practice paying good attention, one of the key aspects of active listening.

The Second P: Providing Gentle Encouragement

Tell the children that another part of active listening, the “Second P,” is providing gentle encouragement. You can do this by simply saying, “Tell me more” or “I’d like to hear more about that.” You can also ask questions. When you ask a question, you show you’re interested in what the other person is saying. We often ask questions when we don’t understand something or when we want to know more. In school, if you don’t understand something the teacher says, it’s important to ask a question. If you don’t, you may miss some important directions or some important information.

Have the children practice asking questions by telling them a simple story about something that happened to you recently and pausing to encourage them to ask you a question about your story—either something they want to know more about or something they don’t understand. Reverse roles: Ask a child to come up and talk about a favorite pet and model asking gentle questions to get the person to say more.

Then ask the children to talk in pairs about a favorite pet or their favorite animal and say that in this exercise, in addition to paying good attention, you want them to ask a question of the other person. After the first child has had a turn to talk and answer the other child’s question, they switch and the other child gets a chance to talk.

Evaluation

What’s one thing you learned today about one of your classmates that you didn’t know before? Give several volunteers a chance to tell the class.

Closing: Moment of Silence

Tell the children you want them to close their eyes and become completely still. When they are completely quiet, you want them to listen very well. Do they hear anything? If so, what are the sounds? Where are they coming from?

After a minute or two of “silence,” ask them what sounds, if any, they heard. What they think was making each of the sounds they heard? Why do they think so?

Lesson #2

Objectives

Students will:

- practice the skill of paraphrasing
- sharpen their powers of observation

Materials Needed

- agenda on chart paper or the chalkboard

Gathering: Changes

Part of good listening is being a keen observer. To sharpen children's powers of observation, introduce the game "Changes." The children work in pairs. One child closes and covers his eyes while the other turns around and changes three things about himself. (He might take off his glasses, tuck in his shirt, change his watch from one wrist to the other.) When he turns back around, the other child opens his eyes and tries to identify the three changes. Then they switch.

Check agenda

Go over the objectives and the agenda.

The Third P: Paraphrasing

Tell the children that another part of active listening, the "Third P," is paraphrasing: saying back in your own words what someone has said. Model it by asking for a volunteer to come up and talk about his or her favorite sport or game. After the child has spoken for a minute or so, paraphrase what the child said. Then reverse roles and ask the child to paraphrase what you say.

Then give the children a chance to practice in pairs. Keep the time for them: one minute for the speaker to talk while the listener listens; another minute or so for the listener to paraphrase; another minute or less for the speaker to correct the paraphrase or add anything s/he wants to add. After the exercise is finished, ask the listeners how it was to listen and paraphrase. Was it easy? Difficult? If so, how? Then ask the speakers how they felt having someone pay good attention and then paraphrase what they'd said. Point out that paraphrasing is a key skill in mediation—where a third person helps two disputants talk out a conflict they're having. (Children may be familiar with mediation by having a peer mediation program in their school.)

Evaluation

What's one thing you learned from today's lesson?

Closing: *New Millennium Telephone Game*

Begin with the traditional game in which you whisper a sentence to the child next to you who whispers it to the child next to him and so on all around the circle. Do it once in the traditional way. Then tell the children you'll play the game again but this time they should use active listening. In other words, they should pay good attention, ask a question if they aren't sure they've heard correctly, and restate what they've heard to be sure they got it. The message should come through much better this time.

Lesson #3

Objectives

Students will

- define the word "conflict";
- share times they were involved in a conflict;
- write about conflicts.

Materials Needed

- agenda on chart paper or the chalkboard
- paper and pencil for writing

Gathering: New and Good

What's something new and good in your life? It can be something small or big. Give the students a minute or two to talk in pairs, then ask a couple of volunteers to share with the group.

Check agenda

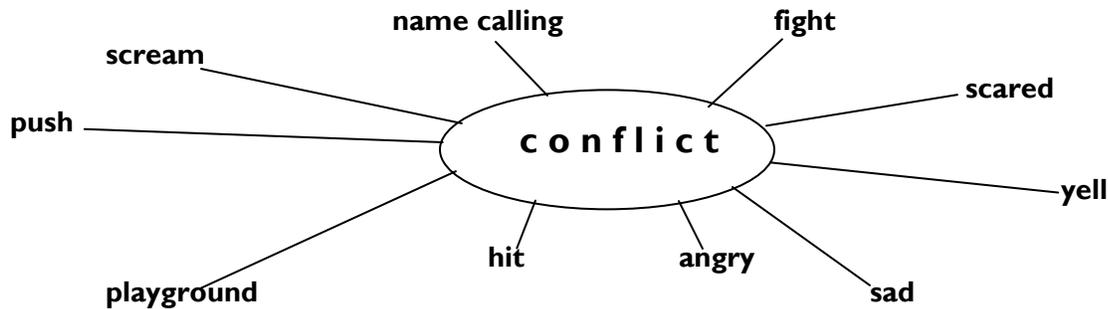
Go over the objectives and the agenda.

Introducing the concept of conflict

In *The Pain and the Great One*, the brother and sister have many conflicts. The word conflict was introduced in Book Talk. Here we develop the idea further.

Write the word conflict in the middle of the chalkboard or a large piece of chart paper. Ask the children to say words that come to their minds when they hear the word

“conflict.” Write the words on the board or chart paper and connect them with lines to the word “conflict” to form a web. Below is a typical “conflict web.”



Ask the children if they have anything they want to say about the web. What do they notice? Most conflict webs, whether made by children or adults, consist primarily of negative words. The children may notice this. If they don't (and if it's true of your web), point it out. Explain that people see conflict as something bad because they tend to link it with violence, with people hurting other people. Conflict can lead to violence sometimes, but it doesn't have to, especially if people have the skills we're developing through the 4Rs curriculum.

Jumping off from the web, develop with the class a working definition of “conflict” as an argument, a disagreement, or a fight. Ask the class to recall some of the conflicts between the brother and sister in the story. There are many kinds of conflicts. Friends can argue over what they want to do together during free time. Classmates can argue over who gets to go first on the computer. This is normal. We all have conflicts from time to time. Conflict is part of life. Ask for volunteers to share with the class a time when they had a conflict. Elicit a few conflict stories from the class.

Writing about conflict

Once you're sure the class understands the concept, have them do a writing activity. Ask them to write about a time they had a conflict. Suggest that their pieces include the following (not necessarily in this order):

- Who was involved in the conflict?
- Where did it take place?
- How were you feeling? How were other people feeling? How did you and the other people express their feelings?
- What caused the conflict?
- What happened? How did it turn out? Was the conflict resolved?
- Were you happy with the way it came out?

Give the students 20-30 minutes to write, then ask them to share their writing with a partner. Remind them to use their good listening skills in paying attention to the other person's piece. They should feel free to use the Second P (Provide Gentle Encouragement) if they want to know more.

After the students have read their pieces to each other in pairs, ask for several volunteers to read their pieces to the group.

Discuss: Was it helpful to write about a conflict? Did writing lead to any insights that will help you deal with this conflict or with a similar conflict in the future?

Evaluation

What's one new idea that you're taking away from this lesson? Give several volunteers a chance to share their thoughts.

Closing: Stretches

Have the children stand up and tell them you're going to lead in them doing "stretches." Make sure there's enough room between each child. "First we stretch up." Put your arms straight up over your head and reach for the ceiling. "Now we stretch down." Bend over and touch your toes. "Now we stretch right." With your arms outstretched, bend at the waist and stretch to the right. "Now we stretch to the left." With your arms outstretched, bend at the waist and stretch to the left. And so on.

Lesson #4

Objectives

Students will

- role-play situations in which characters have different points of view;
- identify the problem and the feelings the characters are having;
- coach the characters in solving the problems.

Materials Needed

- agenda on chart paper or the chalkboard

*Gathering: Touch Blue**

Students are standing up. When the teacher says, “Touch blue,” the students find something blue to touch on someone’s clothing. Continue with other colors. You can also use objects instead of colors: “Touch sneakers.”

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Check agenda

Go over the objectives and the agenda.

Role-play

In a conflict, each person has his or her own point of view. We saw this clearly in *The Pain and the Great One*. In Book Talk, the class worked to understand the sister’s point of view and the brother’s. In this activity, we further develop the children’s understanding of “point of view.” The teacher presents role-plays in which the characters come into conflict and have different points of view on the situation. The children try to understand where the characters are coming from and coach them about solutions to the problem.

Situation #1

The teacher plays a mother, and a child volunteer plays a child. Feel free to improvise on the script below.

Mother: Clean up your room now.

Child: I’m tired, Mom. I don’t want to do it right now.

Mother: It’s like a pig pen. Dirty dishes, piles of dirty clothes on the floor. It’ll attract roaches and germs. You’ll get sick.

Child: No I won’t, Mom. You’re exaggerating. Anyway, I’ll clean it. Just not now. I’m tired.

Mother: There’s always some excuse. Either you’re tired or too busy. Meanwhile, the room gets messier and messier.

Child: Mom, I wish you’d stop nagging me.

Pause the action. Ask, What is happening here? How do you think the characters are feeling? What’s the point of view of the mother? The point of view of the child? Who do you think is right? Elicit children’s thinking. Point out that there isn’t always a clear right or

wrong in an argument. What do they agree with the mother about? What do they agree with the child about?

What advice would you give them for resolving their conflict?

Have you ever experienced a conflict like this? How did it turn out?

Situation #2

The teacher plays Ms. Brown, a teacher, and a child volunteer plays Joanna, a third grader. Feel free to improvise on the script.

Ms. Brown: Joanna, can I speak to you for a moment.

Joanna: Sure.

[The two go to the teacher's desk to have a private conversation.]

Ms. Brown: I've decided to change your seat so you're not sitting next to Yvonne.

Joanna: Why? Yvonne's my best friend! We always sit together—ever since we've been in this school.

Ms. Brown: I know. That's the problem. The two of you are always talking.

Joanna: But all of the talking we do is about our work. You know that Yvonne has trouble with reading and math. I'm helping her. She depends on me.

Ms. Brown: I'm afraid she's depending on you too much. She counts on you for the answers and that's keeping her from thinking for herself. Also, I know you don't only talk about your work.

Joanna: I never give her the answers. I ask questions. I make her think it out for herself. Why don't you ask Yvonne what she thinks? Please don't split us up! We're best friends!

Ms. Brown: I'm sorry, but I just don't think it's working.

Pause the action and guide the class in understanding the points of view of both characters, as you did above. Again, point out that in a conflict there's not always a clear-cut right or wrong. Where do you think Ms. Brown might have a point? Where do you think Joanna might have a point? What advice would you give them for resolving their conflict so that both of them (and Yvonne) feel good about it?

Situation #3

Get volunteers from the class to play two children, Michael and Jason.

Michael: Let's work at the computer.

Jason: No, I'd rather play with the Legos. We could build a city together.

Michael: Oh, come on. Legos are baby stuff. We could do some cool stuff with the computer. I'll show you.

Jason: Every time we have free time, we do what you want to do. This time I want to do what I want to do. Remember last time you promised that this time it would be my choice.

Michael: I know, but the computer is never open, and today it is. Finally we have a chance to use it. I don't want to pass up the chance.

Jason: We agreed this time it would be my choice.

Pause the action here, and guide the children in reflecting on the situation, as above.

Evaluation

What's one thing you liked about today's lesson? Give a few volunteers a chance to share their thoughts.

Closing: Something I'm Looking Forward To

Children talk in pairs for a moment about something they're looking forward to. Ask for a couple of volunteers to share with the group.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES***Who's missing?***

The children are sitting in a circle in no particular order. A child leaves the room. While she's gone, one or more children hide. The rest of the children close in the circle. When the child comes back, she tries to figure out who's missing.

Conflict Escalator

The students are no doubt familiar with escalators in office buildings or department stores. We can use the idea of the escalator to talk about conflict. When a conflict starts small and then people do things that make them angrier and angrier, we say they are “going up the conflict escalator.” If they gradually calm down, we say that they “going down the conflict escalator.”

Discuss: Have you ever go up the conflict escalator? When? What happened? Have you ever gone down the conflict escalator? Did someone help you or did you do it yourself?

Ask the students to write a dialogue between two people who are going up the conflict escalator (that is, having a conflict in which they are getting angrier and angrier at each other. Suggest that at a certain point, one of the people in the conflict or a third person intervenes and changes the energy so that the two people start going down the conflict escalator. What does the third person do? What’s the dialogue like now that they’re going down the escalator?

The “conflict escalator” is a useful idea for understanding conflict situations. Help the children see how it applies in conflicts the children encounter in the 4Rs curriculum, in children’s literature, and in real life.

Related Books

The Blind Men and the Elephant by Karen Blackstein, illustrated by Anne Mitra

Many Moons by James Thurber

The One in the Middle is the Green Kangaroo by Judy Blume, illustrated by Irene Trivas (Judy Blume is a prolific writer whose work lends itself to an author study)

Teacher’s Pet by Johanna Hurwitz, illustrated by Sheila Hamanaka

Where Butterflies Grow by Joanne Ryder, illustrated by Lynne Cherry