

What Is Conflict Management? (Secondary)

Think about a time in the last few months when you were angry with a friend, sibling, teacher, or parent. What was the conflict about? Why did it happen? Conflicts occur for many reasons, like misunderstandings, miscommunication, differences of opinion, and not listening.

Each person involved has a differing perspective that includes their own unique experiences, wants, and needs. When you understand how to examine reasons behind disagreements, respond appropriately, and take steps to resolve them, you are practicing conflict management.

We all experience conflict, as it is a normal part of life, and experiencing conflict isn't necessarily bad. When we work through a conflict, it can actually lead to stronger relationships.

When you learn conflict management, you use strategies like ***explore conflict responses, pause and ponder***, and ***voice my perspective*** to express your wants and feelings respectfully. You also use strategies like ***uncover reasons for the conflict*** and ***seek to understand perspectives*** to understand the other person's point of view and plan your response. Learning Conflict Management Strategies can reduce the stress you feel when you have a disagreement and give you options for working through disagreements.

Explore Conflict Responses (Secondary)

Can you think of a time when you became so frustrated that you shouted at someone and said something you didn't mean? Or a time when you felt hurt and avoided someone and didn't explain how you felt? Conflicts can happen anytime. When you learn to think about ways to respond to a conflict, it prepares you to work through them.

You can use the strategy ***explore conflict responses*** to think about what could happen if you reacted to a conflict in five different ways: like a competing shark, an avoiding turtle, a collaborating owl, an accommodating teddy bear, or a compromising fox. Your conflict response will affect the outcome of a disagreement.

If you choose to be a competing shark, you try to get what you want, even if it hurts the other person's feelings. You might raise your voice, talk over the other person, and insist that you are right. Sometimes it's okay to be a shark, like when someone is getting hurt or needs help immediately.

If you choose to be an avoiding turtle, you avoid the situation and hope it goes away. You stay away from conflict and don't try to solve the problem. Sometimes it's okay to be a turtle, like when you don't care about what happens next or if what you are disagreeing about isn't important to you.

If you choose to be a collaborating owl, you will find a solution where everyone wins. You explain your feelings and listen to others' feelings. An owl talks to the other person and tries to fix the problem so it's a win-win. It's best to be an owl when you care about the other person and when you care about the outcome of the conflict.

Choosing to respond to a conflict like an accommodating teddy bear means that you do what others want, not what you want. A teddy bear wants to be liked by everyone, and they avoid disagreements because they are afraid people won't like them if they disagree. They often fail to share their wants, needs, and feelings.

Responding to a conflict like a compromising fox means that you work to find a solution so everyone wins and loses something. When you respond like a fox, you give up part of what you want and ask the other person to give up part of what they want to resolve the disagreement.

When you ***explore conflict responses***, you think about what it would be like to respond in each of the five ways and decide which one is best based on how much you care about the other person and the outcome of the disagreement.

Pause and Ponder (Secondary)

Have you ever been in a disagreement with someone and reacted quickly by saying or doing something you regretted later? Has there ever been a time when you were so upset that you couldn't think clearly? When you experience disagreements and have strong emotions, you can use the strategy ***pause and ponder*** to help you avoid reacting inappropriately or in a manner that you will regret. Remember that we can't control others but we can control our own attitudes, our words, our actions, and our effort.

When you ***pause and ponder***, you recognize that you are in a conflict and quickly make the decision not to react immediately. Instead, you pause and remove yourself from the situation by saying phrases like "I need to think about this for a minute" or "Let's talk about this later." When you ***pause and ponder***, you give yourself time to respond effectively instead of immediately reacting to the situation.

It's important to ***pause and ponder*** when ***we*** have strong emotions like anger or frustration. It's also important to ***pause and ponder*** when you notice ***the other person*** experiencing those emotions. The next time you are in a conflict with someone, remember to ***pause and ponder*** and give yourself time to think through what you want to say and do.

Plan My Response (Secondary)

Has there ever been a time when you were in a disagreement with someone and you said or did something that made it worse? Have you ever wanted to explain your feelings but instead gave up and walked away? When we experience a disagreement, we choose how we respond to conflict. Choosing to act like a competing shark, an avoiding turtle, a collaborating owl, an accommodating teddy bear, or a compromising fox during a disagreement will affect what happens next.

The strategy ***plan my response*** will help you think about what you want to do and say. This will help you avoid responding in a way that makes the disagreement worse and will help you clearly communicate your perspective.

I used the strategy ***plan my response*** when my friend borrowed my track spikes without asking. We were getting ready for a meet and doing timed trials to determine which heat we would compete in during the track meet. I had been working hard to make the fastest heat and qualify for regionals. My friend had even helped by timing me. When I got to my locker, my spikes were missing, and I had to run my trials in regular sneakers, which didn't give me good traction. I knew my friend had borrowed the spikes, and I was furious.

After I ***paused and pondered***, I ***planned my response*** by thinking about which conflict response would be best. I knew that if I responded like a shark and started yelling at her, it would make the situation worse and I would regret my actions. I care about my friend and knew she hadn't borrowed my spikes to anger me. It was also important to me that I have my track gear ready to go when I needed it. I decided to try to act like an owl by calmly explaining my feelings and telling my friend I didn't want her to borrow my things without asking.

I told my friend that I was really disappointed that she had borrowed my spikes without asking and it had caused me to run slower in my time trials. Then she explained her perspective and told me that she didn't know it was the day of the timed trials and that she wouldn't have borrowed my spikes if she had known. We agreed the best approach was to always ask before we borrowed each other's things. By using the strategy ***plan my response***, I was able to think about what I wanted to say and do and communicate my feelings clearly and respectfully. My friend and I have a better understanding of each other, and we are still great friends.

Manage My Anger (Secondary)

Think about the last time you felt angry. What did it feel like or look like? What thoughts were you having? It was probably difficult to explain your feelings and think clearly. It's okay to feel angry at times, but how we respond to our feelings affects the outcome of the situation and how well we manage the conflict.

You can use the strategy ***manage my anger*** to help identify and explain your feelings.

Managing your anger starts with understanding anger. When you feel angry, your body sends signals, like a racing heart, shortness of breath, and feeling warm. When you experience these signals, it's important to ***pause and ponder*** and then think about what the real emotions are below the surface. For example, you might feel angry at your brother for making fun of you when you made a low grade on your English test, but when you think about your feelings, you realize you were probably embarrassed or hurt.

You can use the Anger Iceberg to help identify feelings that you may not have realized you are experiencing. The Anger Iceberg represents the idea that anger is the emotion displayed on the surface but that other emotions are hidden below the surface. When you think about the emotions you feel inside, you can identify your feelings more accurately and explain them better.

When you start to feel angry, you can ***manage your anger*** by taking deep breaths, going for a walk, or drawing your feelings. Then you can use the Anger Iceberg to identify the other feelings you are having by asking yourself, "What caused me to feel angry? What other emotions am I really feeling?"

I used the strategy ***manage my anger*** when my family moved to a new town. I was worried about making new friends, but while shooting baskets at the park, a couple of kids my age invited me to play on their team during a tournament later that week. I was so excited because I loved basketball and had made some friends. On the night of the tournament, my parents told me that I needed to help them unload boxes from the moving truck before I went to the tournament. It was going to make me late for the tournament!

I could feel my heart beating fast, and I was getting short of breath. I felt so angry! It was hard, but I knew I needed to calm down before I said anything to my parents, so I walked around the block to calm myself. As I was walking, I thought about what I was really feeling. I realized I wasn't angry at my parents for asking for my help; I was disappointed about being late for the tournament. I knew that if I yelled at my parents, it would make the situation worse. I decided to calmly explain how I felt and why I was feeling that way. I said, "I know you need my help unloading the truck, but I got invited to play in a basketball tournament, and it's important for me to make new friends. Is there another time we could unload the truck?" My parents explained that they didn't realize I was invited to play in the tournament and that they wanted me to make new friends, so together we agreed that I could go to the tournament and I would help unpack boxes when I got back.

Managing my anger helped me recognize that I was experiencing strong emotions and why I was experiencing them. ***Managing my anger*** helped me achieve an outcome to a conflict that was favorable to everyone involved. Using the strategy ***manage my anger*** when you have

strong emotions can help you calm down and communicate more clearly. You can use this strategy anytime you have strong feelings and don't want them to get in the way of communicating what you want or need.

Uncover Reasons for the Disagreement (Secondary)

Has there ever been a time when a friend wouldn't speak to you and you weren't sure why? Has someone ever been angry with you, and you couldn't understand why they were upset?

Conflicts happen for many different reasons, like when you miscommunicate and say something you didn't mean or when you misunderstood someone else's actions. There are even times when other people misunderstand your intentions.

You can use the strategy ***uncover reasons for the disagreement*** to try and understand what's behind a disagreement. When you ***uncover reasons for the disagreement***, you start by thinking **exactly what happened and where there may have been a misunderstanding**. You can ask yourself, "What did I say or do that could have been confusing?" "Could I have misunderstood the other person?" or "Is there another way to look at this?"

I used the strategy ***uncover reasons for the disagreement*** when I couldn't understand why my mom was so upset about me going out with my friends even when I was home before curfew. I had gone to the movies with my friends, and when I came home, my mom said she was disappointed that I had disrespected her. I said, "I don't know what you are talking about," and she said we would talk about it in the morning. I went to my room to try and think about what I had said or done that would have upset my mom. I thought, "What did I do to upset her? Did I say something rude? Did I forget to do something?" Then I remembered she had asked me to pick her up from the car repair shop before I went to the movies. I scrolled through my texts and saw that I had missed two from her asking me where I was.

I had put my phone on silent before I went into the movies and had missed her texts. I felt bad. The next morning, I apologized and said I had put my phone on silent and didn't see her texts. She explained that she had to call an Uber and didn't like spending the extra money. We talked through the disagreement. I agreed to try and remember things better, and she agreed to not assume I was ignoring what she needed. By using the strategy ***uncover reasons for the disagreement***, I was able to understand how my mom felt, and it helped her to understand my perspective too. When you use the strategy ***uncover reasons for the disagreement***, it can help you think through your words and actions to determine why a conflict has happened. It can also help you understand the other person's words and actions.

Voice My Perspective (Secondary)

Has a friend ever offended you by making a joke or saying something that hurt you? Maybe you found it difficult to explain what you wanted during a disagreement. When you need to explain your point of view, including how you feel, what you want, and why you want something, you can use the strategy ***voice my perspective*** to help others understand your viewpoint.

Your perspective is the way you understand a situation based on what you have experienced in your life. Each person has their own perspective, and it's important to acknowledge the different perspectives during a disagreement. When you ***voice your perspective***, you explain your feelings and the reasons behind them. This will help others understand you, especially during a conflict. You can ***voice your perspective*** by saying, "I feel [blank] when [blank]" and "I think [blank] because [blank]."

I used the strategy ***voice my perspective*** when my friend Kara and I had a disagreement about our World History project. Our project was over the Roman Empire, and I wanted to create a newspaper that included articles and advertisements related to ancient Roman life. Kara wanted to create a museum exhibit about artifacts found at Pompeii. I was getting really frustrated because we didn't have much time to complete the project and I didn't see how we would ever agree. I decided to take a deep breath and use the strategy ***voice my perspective*** to explain why I wanted to create a newspaper about ancient Rome. I said, "I feel anxious when we don't have much time to complete a project. I think creating a newspaper will be the fastest and most informational way to complete the project because I know how to lay out newspapers from working on the school paper and I am good at writing." Kara thought about my perspective and said, "If you can do the layout and write the articles, I can do the pictures and artwork." She explained that she had already started looking at pictures of ancient Rome for the museum display. We both agreed that dividing the parts of a newspaper between artwork and writing would be the most efficient way to complete the project.

By explaining what I wanted and why I wanted it, I was able to help Kara understand my perspective and begin to resolve the disagreement we were having. When you need to ***voice your perspective***, use the prompts "I feel [blank] when [blank]" and "I think [blank] because [blank]."

Seek to Understand Perspectives (Secondary)

Have you and your friend ever had completely different opinions about something? Maybe you don't like to play sports, and she doesn't understand why you like to read so much. We all feel different about things because we have different perspectives, which can sometimes lead to conflict. It's important to talk with the person.

During a disagreement, everyone has their own unique way of perceiving things based on experiences they have had. ***Seeking to understand perspectives*** helps you consider someone else's background and experiences and discuss how they perceived the situation. You can use the strategy ***seek to understand perspectives*** when you have a disagreement with someone and don't understand their actions or feelings. When you seek to understand perspectives, you ask them questions like "Can you tell me how you are feeling?" or "Is there something I don't understand?" to help you understand their point of view. ***Seeking to understand perspectives*** helps you understand why a conflict has occurred and what you could do to resolve the issue.

I used the strategy ***seek to understand perspectives*** with my friend Madison. I had posted a picture of myself with some other friends at a barbecue. Madison posted a comment that said, "When your best friend gets a better offer on Saturday night." When I saw it, I was so hurt. I couldn't understand why she would be mean. It took me a few hours to cool off and feel like I could talk to her without getting angry. When I finally talked to her, I said, "Is there something I don't understand? Why did you imply that I didn't want to spend time with you?" She explained that she didn't play well in the basketball game and they had lost the game. When she got home, she wanted to spend time with me because she knew I would help her feel better. When I didn't answer her text, she looked on Instagram and saw the picture of me at the barbecue. It hurt her feelings that I was out having a good time without her and not answering her texts, so she tried to hurt me back.

I explained that I knew she was at the basketball game and would be home late. I went to my other friend's house and didn't see her texts until after she had posted the comment.

I wanted to resolve the issue with Madison, so I tried to understand her perspective. I imagined being disappointed about a game you wanted to win and being disappointed about your best friend not texting you back. But I needed to know more about why she was upset, so I asked her to explain her feelings and the reason she had posted the comment on Instagram. She explained that she was having a bad day and didn't really mean what she had posted. Then I explained, "I understand that you felt disappointed about the game and disappointed about me not texting you back, but your comment really hurt my feelings." She apologized and said she would take it down. We agreed that putting negative things about each other on social media was crossing the line, and we promised each other we wouldn't ever do that again. By using the strategy ***seek to understand perspectives***, I was able to understand how my friend felt.

You can use the strategy ***seek to understand perspectives*** when it's hard for you to understand someone's thoughts or feelings.

Listen and Summarize (Secondary)

Have you ever been so upset with someone that it was hard to focus on what they were saying? Maybe they were trying to explain why they had done something, but all you could think about was what you were going to say back.

When you have a disagreement with someone, it can be hard to focus on what they are saying because your emotions are getting in the way. It's important to listen to what the other person is saying and try to understand their perspective so you can resolve the issue. When it's difficult to focus on what the other person is saying, use the strategy ***listen and summarize*** to help you focus and show respect for the other person. When you ***listen and summarize***, you:

1. make eye contact with the other person,
2. listen carefully to what they are saying, and
3. use your own words to repeat back what they told you. You can use phrases like "It sounds like ..." or "In other words ..." to help you summarize what the other person has told you.

I used the strategy ***listen and summarize*** when I was upset with my mom for not letting me hang out with my friends. When she started to explain why I couldn't see my friends, it was hard to focus on what she was saying because I was mad at her. I didn't want to make things worse, and I wanted to understand why she hadn't let me spend time with my friends, so I used the strategy ***listen and summarize*** to help me focus. I made eye contact with my mom and listened closely to what she was saying. She explained that I couldn't hang out with my friends, because my grandparents were coming to visit. They had wanted to surprise me, and that's why she hadn't told me. It was important to her that I spend time with them because they hadn't visited in a long time and they were excited to hear about how I was doing. I summarized what my mom had told me by saying, "My grandparents wanted to surprise me, so you told me I couldn't hang out with friends, and it's important that I spend time with my grandparents." She said that she was glad that I understood, and I felt better about not being able to go to spend time with friends. I also really wanted to spend time with my grandparents this weekend. By using the strategy ***listen and summarize***, I was able to better understand my mom's actions.

The next time you find it difficult to focus because you are feeling angry or frustrated, use the strategy ***listen and summarize*** to help you understand the other person and show them that you care.

Find a Solution (Secondary)

Have you ever been in an argument with someone, and you couldn't stop arguing? Maybe you tried to explain your feelings but didn't feel like your friend even listened, or maybe you had no idea why your sibling was angry with you. When you want to end a conflict, you can use the strategy ***find a solution*** to negotiate what happens next.

Finding a solution means you work with the other person to decide how to resolve the problem. When you ***find a solution***, you take turns ***voicing your perspective***. Then both of you share ideas for ending the disagreement, and finally, you both choose and agree on what will happen next.

There are seven steps to ***finding a solution***, and you can remember them by thinking about the colors of the rainbow.

Steps to ***find a solution***:

- Step 1. Red: Partner A ***voices their perspective*** by explaining how they feel and what they think.
- Step 2. Orange: Partner B ***summarizes*** what Partner A has just said.
- Step 3. Yellow: Partner B ***voices their perspective*** by explaining how they feel and what they think.
- Step 4. Green: Partner A ***summarizes*** what Partner B has just said.
- Step 5. Blue: Partner A shares a few ideas for resolving the conflict.
- Step 6. Indigo: Partner B shares a few ideas for resolving the conflict.
- Step 7. Violet: Together, both partners decide what to do next and how to resolve the conflict.

I used the strategy ***find a solution*** when my friend Lucy and I had a disagreement over what song we were going to sing for the school talent show. I wanted to sing a song that was in my vocal range, but she wanted to sing a song that was popular and would be more engaging for the audience. Every time we discussed the two options, we ended up arguing even more, and we were running out of time to submit our song, so I used the strategy ***find a solution*** to help us come to an agreement about what to do.

I asked Lucy to explain how she felt and what she wanted. She said, "I feel excited to sing a popular song that everyone knows. I want us to perform a popular song because it will be more fun." I summarized what Lucy had said. Then it was my turn to explain why I wanted to sing a different song. I said, "I feel nervous to learn a song that is out of my vocal range, especially if I am going to sing it in front of the whole school. I want to sing a song that I am comfortable with because I will sing better." After Lucy summarized what I had said, she shared a couple of ideas for deciding on a song. She suggested we order an accompaniment track in my range. When it was my turn to share ideas, I suggested a completely different song, but I also mentioned I liked her idea of an accompaniment track, so we asked the music teacher if we could get the track in time. When we found out we could, we agreed to perform the song Lucy preferred but in my range using an accompaniment track. Using the strategy ***find a solution*** helped both of us listen to each other and consider different ideas for resolving the issue.

When you need to ***find a solution*** to a disagreement with someone, remember that each step in the process is represented by a color of the rainbow. When you complete each step for ***finding a solution***, you work to resolve disagreements on your own.

Help Others Find Solutions (Secondary)

Has there ever been a time when your friends or siblings were involved in a disagreement and they couldn't seem to resolve the issue? There are times when others need help resolving an issue. You can use the strategy ***help others find solutions*** to help them resolve issues. When you ***help others find solutions***, you serve as a mediator for those involved in the disagreement. The mediator learns as much as they can about the problem, avoids taking sides, and helps both people listen to each other.

When you ***help others find solutions***, you encourage each person to be honest and ask questions. It is important to acknowledge each person's feelings and understand their perspective.

Mediators follow seven steps when ***helping others find a solution***. You can remember each step by thinking of the colors in a rainbow.

Steps to ***help others find solutions***:

- Step 1. Red: Ask Partner A to ***voice their perspective*** by explaining how they feel and what they think.
- Step 2. Orange: Ask Partner B to ***summarize*** what Partner A has just said.
- Step 3. Yellow: Ask Partner B to ***voice their perspective*** by explaining how they feel and what they think.
- Step 4. Green: Ask Partner A to ***summarize*** what Partner B has just said.
- Step 5. Blue: Ask Partner A to share a few ideas for resolving the conflict.
- Step 6. Indigo: Ask Partner B to share a few ideas for resolving the conflict.
- Step 7. Violet: Ask both partners to work together and decide how to resolve the conflict.

I used the strategy ***help others find solutions*** when my friends Jordan and Brett were arguing over which parts of their lab report each person would complete. I reminded my friends that it's okay to have disagreements and to feel frustrated with each other. Then I explained that I could serve as the mediator for their disagreement and help them follow a process that would lead to a resolution. I started by drawing a rainbow that had all seven colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

I pointed to the red band and asked Jordan to ***voice his perspective*** by explaining his feelings and thoughts. He said, "Since there are eight sections to the lab report, I think it makes the most sense for me to do the first four sections and Brett to do the last four sections." Then I pointed to the orange band and asked Brett to ***summarize*** what Jordan had said.

After Brett ***summarized*** what Jordan had said, it was his turn to explain his feelings and what he wanted to happen. I pointed to the yellow band and asked him to ***voice his perspective***. He said, "The last section of the lab report is the conclusion, and it's much longer than any of the other sections and requires more writing. I want each of us to do the same amount of writing."

After Brett explained what he wanted to happen, I pointed to the green band, and it was Jordan's turn to ***summarize*** what Brett had said. When we got to the blue band, it was Jordan's turn to share a few ideas for how they could end the disagreement. Then I pointed to the indigo band and asked Brett to share his ideas for ending the disagreement.

Finally, I asked them to work together and agree on what they should do to end the disagreement. I asked Jordan and Brett to consider each other's ideas. After they talked through each of the ideas, they agreed that Jordan would complete Sections 1–7 of the lab report and Brett would take the longest section, the conclusion. This felt agreeable to both sides because each person was doing the same amount of writing.

I was able to help my friends ***find a solution*** to their problem by remembering the colors in the rainbow. The next time you have friends or siblings who can't agree on what to do, use the strategy ***help others find solutions*** to help them resolve the conflict.