



Conflict Solution Strategies

If you sense a conflict in your group here is a list of key actions that help you immediately to deescalate and resolve the problem:

- ✓ Briefly describe the problem and share your positive intentions
- ✓ Behave as a mediator and be neutral
- ✓ Actively listen and seek FIRST to understand: Mirror or paraphrase what's being said. Probe for information and feelings.
- ✓ Be empathic: Acknowledge emotions ("I see that you're upset," or "I understand that this is a powerful topic for you").
- ✓ Show verbal and non-verbal attentiveness
- ✓ Know when to be silent: Most of the speaking should be done by the people in the conflict.
- ✓ Share your perspective of the problem and the impact
- ✓ Work together on an action plan or next steps

If you have a little more time, here are some steps that can help in a mediation process:

1. **Initiation:** Create a positive atmosphere where both sides feel comfortable. Refer to the dialogue rules (see file in PR7).
2. **Explain your point of view:** both conflict parties explain their point of view. Make sure that they speak to each other, and not to you. You can encourage them by asking open questions and summarising from time to time what has been said.
3. **Conflict enlightenment:** After both sides have explained their point of view, now is the time to clarify what the conflict is really about. Very often, only a small part of the conflict is really visible; lots of emotions and thoughts are hidden underneath the visible part. Here, you can clarify emotions, different interests and needs and the backgrounds of the conflict parties.
4. **Solution finding:** You can encourage the conflict parties to brainstorm possible solutions, without proposing any yourself. They might expect you to tell them what to do, but it is important that the solution comes from themselves. 'Solutions' can be ways to deal with the problem constructively and respectfully and help both parties to move on.
5. **Agree on moving on:** Writing down what the two sides decided, means they will be really clear about what they agreed on. It is also useful to discuss what will happen if one of the parties does not comply with their agreement.

Cf. sources:

<https://teaching.cornell.edu/resource/getting-started-managing-classroom-conflict> (accessed 2023-07-28)

Christine Sudbrock, Frances Marsh et al. (eds.): Peace Education. Handbook for Educators.

