Class Activities

# Chapter 11: Managing Conflict

## Guide to the Class Activities

Each activity is designed based on Fink’s Learning Taxonomy and is tagged with the following tags under the taxonomy’s learning and assessment structure:

1. Foundational Knowledge (F)
2. Application (A)
3. Integration (I)
4. Human Dimension (H)
5. Caring (C)
6. Learning How to Learn (L)

These activities may be used in either small-group or large-group settings, depending on class size and time available. Some may also be suitable as homework.

## Activities

### Conflict Scenarios (A, I)

After students have taken the Conflict Style Questionnaire, have them form groups according to their dominant style. Ask students to share what they like about their dominant conflict style and when it works well for them. What situations are typically more challenging for them to handle? Then have each group discuss the conflict scenarios below and the ways they would naturally respond.

* You have graduated from college, have found a job, and are renting an apartment with a friend. You agree to share all rent and utility expenses, share cleaning duties, and purchase your own food. In addition, the landlord has a stipulation that overnight guests are allowed no more than 4 nights per month. Within the first two months, your roommate pays her half of the rent, but does not help with the cleaning. Garbage piles up in the kitchen and no one takes it out. Some days you have discovered your food in the refrigerator is missing. Your roommate also has her boyfriend staying with her in the apartment several nights a week, which limits your free use of the bathroom and living room. You’ve mentioned to her once already that you’d like more help with cleaning, but your roommate has not responded. What do you do now?
* You’ve been in your new job for 8 months. During this time, various co-workers have collected money from the staff for baby shower gifts, wedding gifts, and birthday presents for the boss and other employees. Now they are collecting money for a Christmas present for the boss. They are asking for a $20 contribution per person. Money is tight for you and you really can’t afford the $20. On the other hand, you don’t want to be perceived as unfriendly, or not part of the group. What do you do?

After each group shares its range of responses, hold a full class discussion. What type of conflict is represented in each scenario? According to the text, what would be the most appropriate response of the offended party? In small groups again, ask students to write a script for what should be said and/or done in each scenario. Have them read their scripts to the class. Which scripts would they be most likely to use? Why? Which scripts are most face-saving?

### Conflict Bingo (F)

This is a fun way of reviewing the core concepts of the chapter. Ask students to fill in their choice of concepts from the list provided onto the bingo board. (Students will not all write down the same concepts). As the instructor then reads off the definitions or explanations from the master list, students find the appropriate square on their bingo board (if it’s there) and mark it with an X. The first student to cross out five squares in a row (in any direction) calls out “bingo.” The instructor should check to make sure the correct squares have been marked.

Master List of Terms and Definitions

Intrapersonal – This discord occurs within an individual

Interpersonal – This conflict occurs between individuals

Struggle – This is the result of opposing forces coming together

Interdependence – This is when parties mutually influence each other

Affective – This occurs when org. members have incompatible feelings about an issue

Avoiding – Style that withdraws from conflict

Accommodating – Style that gives in to another’s demands

Competing – Style that wants to get its own way

Collaborating – Style that seeks to maximize benefits for self and others

Compromising – Style that seeks the middle ground

Differences – This is another term for incompatibilities

Value conflict – Ex. Should sex education be offered by parents or by the schools?

Belief conflict – Ex. Each of us thinks our group project is superior to the other’s

Esteem – The desire to feel significant, useful and worthwhile

Control – Desire to impact other people and situations

Affiliation – Desire to belong and be included by others

Goal conflict – This occurs when deciding on a desired outcome or way to achieve it

Substantive – This conflict occurs when people disagree on what the goal should be

Differentiation – This clarifies people’s positions with regard to each other

Fractionation – This breaks down conflict into smaller pieces

Face saving – This establishes one’s self-image in response to threat

Assertiveness – Attempts to satisfy one’s own concerns

Cooperativeness – Attempts to satisfy the concerns of others

Interests – The relevant needs and values supporting our positions

Positions – Our stand or perspective in a particular conflict

Separating people from problem – This is the first principle of Principled Negotiation

Options for mutual gain – This principle encourages seeking creative solutions to conflict

Objective criteria – A means of settling different interests in an unbiased way

Precedent – Looking at how an issue has been resolved previously

Personality clash – Another way of describing relational conflict

### Key Quotes (A, H)

Have students meet in small groups and select quotes from the chapter that they found compelling or questionable. Each group should select one quote to share with the class and to lead discussion on it. Discussion can involve debate, application, brainstorming or whatever form the group thinks is most productive.

### Create a Skit (A)

Have students form small groups. Assign each group a different type of conflict (beliefs, values, goals, esteem, control, affiliation) and ask them to develop a two-part skit. The first version should show the conflict being unsuccessfully managed. The second version should show the conflict being successfully managed using the suggestions offered in the text. Afterwards, the class can discuss how to make the proposed conflict management strategies more realistic and, therefore, likely to be used.

### Daily Dilbert (A)

Project the daily Dilbert cartoon strip for the class; it appears on the site’s homepage ([www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com)). What type of conflict is represented there: content, relationship, or both? If content, is the conflict about beliefs, values, goals or something else? If relationship, does the conflict involve the character’s self-esteem, need for control, or desire to affiliate? Ask students to change the scenario into one involving a different type of conflict. Discuss: Why is it hard sometimes to identify what a conflict is really about?

### Storyboarding (I, H)

Storyboarding is a way of graphically representing information in consecutive steps that lead to a desired outcome, or answer a specific question. This planning strategy was explained in the chapter 1 Class Activities.

For chapter 11, ask students to reflect on a significant conflict they were part of in the past and to map its path in a way that makes sense to them. This can be done in class or as homework. What precipitated the conflict? How did it continue? What efforts were made to manage it? Which efforts were successful? Which weren’t? How many people were involved in the conflict? What did each person contribute to it? Has the conflict been resolved? What is the aftermath? What are the next steps?

After students have completed their individual storyboards, class discussion can positively address:

* What are common themes in these conflict narratives?
* Are most of the conflicts relational, content-based, or both?
* How can we encourage the people we are in conflict with to use the resolution approaches described in chapter 11?
* Considering the storyboard, are there points at which intervention could or should have happened earlier?
* What did student learn from mapping out the conflict trajectory?

### Personas in Conflict (A, I, H)

The chapter 3 Class Activities describe a common technique used in marketing, which is developing personas or user profiles of potential customers and clients. The profiles are then used as “target audiences” for developing new products and testing marketing campaigns. If students have developed their personas previously, have them bring their visual representations to class. Sample profile:

Photo

Jim, American

Age 30

Retail manager

Baseball fan

Strengths: Achiever, Command, Self-Assurance, Futuristic

Weakness: Includer

Likable: Handles stress well, self-deprecating humor

In class, have students exchange personas and discuss what it would be like to work with such a person on a team. What differences would they have with this person? What potential relational conflicts might arise?

Have students form groups of 4-5 and imagine their respective personas as a team working together to address a community problem. What content conflicts might they have? What relational conflicts? Which conflict styles do they imagine each persona would tend to use? How would these interact?

### Defining Your Role (A)

One of the causes of conflict is that the parties involved are interdependent and may perceive incompatible differences on some level – in desires for esteem, control, or connectedness. Have students recall a current or past relational conflict. Can they clarify their personal boundaries in this interdependent relationship? What do or don’t they want from the other party? What are their respective roles? For example, a college instructor may define her role as an educator (to students who want many different things from her), as, “I’m not your mom. And I’m not your boss. I’m not your adversary, either. You’re not my customer or my client. I don’t work for you. I work with you. We are partners in this class.” This may affect student perceptions of her and how they can interact with her in the future.

## Writing Assignments

### Your Conflict Style (A, H)

Have students write a 2 – 3 page analysis of how their dominant and less dominant conflict styles affect their leadership abilities and outcomes. How might using a different conflict style improve the outcomes? Ask them to provide specific examples to support their argument.

### People or Problems (A, H)

According to Fisher and Ury, conflicts are comprised of a *problem factor* and a *people factor*. Have students reflect on the common conflicts they experience. In a 2-3 page paper, have students explain which factor is harder for them to manage and what skills they need to practice in order to increase their chances for achieving positive conflict outcomes.

### Learning from Others (A, I, H)

Have students write a brief (1-2 pages) paper on this prompt: Think of a person you know personally who is effective at managing conflict with others. What makes them effective and what might you learn from them?

Have students identify a political leader who seems to be effective at conflict resolution or negotiating with political opponents. Why do you think they are effective and what might you learn from them?

### Fractionation (A, I)

Ask students to reflect on a current conflict at school or work. How could the problems be broken down into smaller pieces? How could each of the pieces be addressed? In this instance how likely is fractionation to produce the four positive outcomes described in the text?

### One Minute Paper Topics (F, A, I)

The type of conflict I most try to avoid is…

Share an example of a time when you successfully managed a significant conflict at home, work or school.

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