

Learning Conflict Resolution Strategies to Engage in Difficult Conversations

Activity

Resource: Vaccination Talks Toolkit

Grade(s): 9 10

Division(s): Senior

What Is It All About?

Participants identify people and factors that influence their perspectives and decisions related to their health.

Participants identify and practice conflict resolution skills to resolve conflicts that may arise in conversations when there are diverse perspectives about a health topic such as vaccinations.

Curriculum Connections

1, C1, C2, C3

Why Do It?

Providing participants with an understanding of the important role relationships play in shaping their perspective and decisions and equipping them with the tools to practice the conflict resolution skills needed to navigate difficult conversations related to their personal health decisions.

How Do We Do It?

- Explain to participants that conflict occurs when interacting with others, particularly when there are diverse perspectives and choices about a topic or decision. To build and maintain healthy relationships, it is important to approach the conflict with a positive attitude and respect for others' perspectives and choices and learn conflict resolution skills needed to minimize and resolve conflicts when interacting with others.
- Divide participants into groups of 4-5 and provide access to a shared document (chart paper and markers or online interactive tool). Use a [Graffiti](#) strategy for participants to complete the following tasks:
 - identify situations that might lead to conflict in their relationships with peers, friends, and family members and when interacting online with others
 - identify people and factors that influence their perspectives about situations involving conflict and when making decisions (e.g., family, friends, other adults, society, media, social media, culture, religion, personal beliefs, and values)
 - identify the pros and cons of seeking support from each identified individual and factor (e.g., the family knows them, shared values but may not support independent decision making; friends – trust and value perspectives, may not provide a balanced view)
- Use the following prompt for students to generate a list of conflict resolution strategies to add to their graffiti: "Sometimes, when involved in a conflict, we get angry, express emotions and say things that we don't mean, or accuse people of things unfairly, and then feel bad about this later. Learning conflict resolution skills can help identify the causes of a conflict and create solutions. What strategies can we use to manage these strong emotions and minimize the potential for interpersonal conflict?" (Possible responses might include: recognizing one's feelings and expressing them in a positive way, using calming words or taking a break to defuse the tension and come back to the conversation later, paraphrasing what the other person says to show you are actively listening to their perspective, avoid dominating the conversation, seek to understand the other person's point of view, focus on the problem; don't make the conflict about the person, use "I" statements, be assertive and show respect for yourself while showing respect for the other person.¹ Have groups post their completed Graffiti in a

designated space for other participants to reference.

- Have participants remain in their groups. Explain to participants that conflict can arise when discussing topics such as vaccinations because of the diversity of perspectives. Have groups identify a situation in which conflict might occur (e.g., when talking to friends about vaccinations, during impromptu or formal discussions in class, at school or in the community, when seasonal vaccinations such as a flu vaccination are available or vaccination clinics are held at school, when choices and decisions about vaccinations differ within families.) Have groups select a situation that involves a discussion about vaccinations and role-play the conflict, using some or all of the conflict resolution strategies contained in the group-generated Graffiti. Invite groups to role-play their conflict for another group or the larger group.

What Else Do We Need?

- Access to a shared document (chart paper and markers or online interactive tool)
- Information about passive, aggressive and assertive strategies to share with participants

How Do We Get Creative?

- Have participants generate examples of passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour, and the impact these behaviours can have when trying to resolve a conflict. Have participants identify assertiveness strategies that they might use to resolve a conflict.
- Have participants reflect on a situation in which they have experienced conflict to identify successful conflict resolution strategies and ones they might use to help resolve future conflicts.
- Have groups practise their conflict resolution skills by role-playing other situations that may involve conflict (e.g., staying out past curfew, having friends over for a party, inviting an intimate partner over for dinner for the first time or when adult family members are not home).
- Debrief each scenario with participants.

¹Extracted from The Ontario Curriculum, Grade 9-12 Health and Physical Education, 2015. Retrieved from:

<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/curriculum/secondary-hpe>