

# *Conflict Resolution*

Can only happen when  
we attack the problem,  
not the person.

Whenever you're in  
conflict with someone,  
there is one factor that can  
make the difference  
between damaging your  
relationship and  
deepening it. That factor  
is attitude.

William James

## September Character Connection Theme: Conflict Resolution



### Definitions

According to the dictionary, *conflict* is “a prolonged battle; a struggle; clash.” It is a controversy, disagreement, opposition, or collision. In psychology, it is the “opposition or simultaneous functioning of mutually exclusive impulses, desires, or tendencies.” Conflict is synonymous to discord.<sup>1</sup> One of the dictionary definitions of *resolution* is “the action or process of separating or reducing something into its constituent parts.” In medicine, it is “the subsiding or termination of an abnormal condition, as of a fever or inflammation.” It can also be “an explanation, as of a problem or puzzle; a solution.”<sup>2</sup> Good conflict resolution strategies help defuse stress by seeing the problem in a different light. Many stress busters work because they alter thinking processes.<sup>3</sup> Looking at others such as Ghandi and Abraham Lincoln that have successfully handled conflict is also helpful.

### Quotes

**“Have a dialogue between the two opposing parts and you will find that they always start out fighting each other until we come to an appreciation of difference. ... a oneness and integration of the two opposing forces. Then the civil war is finished, and your energies are ready for your struggle with the world.”—Frederick Salomon Perls**

“I’m not a combative person. My long experience has taught me to resolve conflict by raising the issues before I or others burn their boats.”—Alistair Grant<sup>4</sup>

“When you’re finally up on the moon, looking back at the earth, all these differences and nationalistic traits are pretty well going to blend and you’re going to get a concept that maybe this is really one world and why . . . can’t we learn to live together like decent people?  
—Borman Frank

“Yes, we are all different. Different customs, different foods, different mannerisms, different languages, but not so different that we cannot get along with one another. If we will disagree without being disagreeable.” —J. Martin Kohe

“Every kind of peaceful cooperation among men is primarily based on mutual trust and only secondarily on institutions such as courts of justice and police.” --Albert Einstein<sup>5</sup>

### Activities

\*\*Place a ping-pong ball in the air flow of an upward-pointing hair dryer. Demonstrate that no matter how much hot air is coming out of the hair dryer, the ping-pong ball does not fly upward with the moving air, but remains suspended. Talk about Bernoulli’s principle. Then talk about how anger,

<sup>1</sup> “conflict” [The American Heritage Dictionary](#)

<sup>2</sup> “resolution” [The American Heritage Dictionary](#)

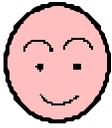
<sup>3</sup> Provo PACE resources

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes\\_conflict.html](http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_conflict.html) Cyber Nation

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes\\_peace.html](http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_peace.html) Cyber Nation

frustration, yelling, and a lot of verbal hot air are not as effective as other means of moving a problem towards a solution.

\*\*Have students write down situations that frustrate or anger them. Practice using the Chill Drill in these situations. (Please see <http://www.coopext.colostate.edu/PIP/parentingmatters/pmoct99.pdf>, and Provo PACE resources)



Chill: Take control and choose how you will respond.

Blow: Take a “balloon breath” and breathe deliberately

Face: Smile to signal the brain to start the body’s natural calming abilities

Space: Give yourself and others plenty of space



\*\*Read Shel Silverstein’s poem, “Ations” ([A light in the Attic](#), page 59) Talk about other “ation” words that make our civilization work: cooperation, communication, arbitration, negotiation, mediation, legislation, litigation . . .) Play “ation” charades by dividing the class in groups and give each an “ation” word. Have each group act out a problem and a solution using their word, while other groups try to guess the method that they are using to solve the presented problem.

## Stories

### **Hercules and Athena<sup>6</sup>**

Hercules was traveling on a long road. It was late afternoon when he first spotted the beast on the side of the thoroughfare. As he came closer, the beast threatened him. For a few minutes it seemed as if the beast would harm him greatly. Hercules responded by hitting it with a club. To his surprise, the beast seemed larger. Again he hit it and again it loomed larger than before. This continued for several more minutes with Hercules hitting stronger and quicker blows. However, the monster only grew larger and more fierce. Suddenly the goddess Athena appeared and held his club. “Stop,” she said, “For this monster is strife: The more you hit it, the larger it becomes! Let it alone and it will soon be as small as it was at first.”



### **The Fly and the Bald Man**

There once was a bald man who was much bothered by a fly that continually wished to land on the top of his head. The man waved his hands. However, the fly still persisted in trying to walk on the man’s head. Finally the frustrated man got a fly swatter. It was difficult to maneuver the swatter to the right place, yet when it seemed close enough, he gave a hard hit. Of course, the fly easily dodged the awkward hit, and the man was left with a smarting sensation on his bald pate.<sup>7</sup> *Revenge will hurt the avenger. Brawn without brain may leave one the loser in a conflict.*

### **Percy Julian**

Percy Julian was born in Montgomery, Alabama in 1899. He was the grandson of a slave. At that time, public school for blacks stopped at the eighth grade. Wanting more of an education, he enrolled as a sub-Freshman at DePauw University. As a student, Percy lived in the attic of a fraternity house. He supported himself and paid tuition by working as a waiter and ditch digger. He studied hard a graduated valedictorian of his class. Unfortunately, his teachers informed him that there were no opportunities for people of his color. Undaunted, he went to Fisk University as a chemistry instructor, then to Harvard where he obtained his masters degree. However Harvard was unwilling or unable to offer Percy a faculty position. He went on to receive a PhD in Vienna.<sup>8</sup> Later, as a lab director at the Glidden company, he discovered a way to synthesize hormones.

Percy Julian’s work in synthesizing important chemicals made medicine more economic and plentiful.<sup>9</sup> His research yielded him over 100 patents, 19 honorary degrees, and 18 academic and civic citations. Conflict erupted when his home in Oak Park was twice firebombed. With the support for the

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pacificnet.net/~johnr/cgi/aesop1.cgi?2&HerculesandPallas> “Hercules and Pallas,” Aesop’s Fables Online Collection

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pacificnet.net/~johnr/cgi/aesop1.cgi?sel&TheBaldManandtheFly>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nap.edu/html/biomems/pjulian.html> Biographical Memoirs: Percy Lavon Julian

<sup>9</sup> <http://pbs.bilkent.edu.tr/wgbh/aso/databank/entries/bmjuli.html> People and Discoveries

Julian family from the community members, the problem was soon resolved. The family continued to reside in this home even after Percy's death.

This scientist, inventor, business and social leader liked to describe his life's climb in the words of Donald Adams' *The Seventh Fold*: "My dear friends, who daily climb uncertain hills in the countries of their minds, hills that have to do with the future of our country and of our children, may I humbly submit to you, the only thing that has enabled me to keep doing the creative work, was the constant determination: Take heart! Go farther on!"<sup>10</sup>

*By persistence, hard work, and enlisting community support, Percy Julian was able to overcome the conflicts and obstacles of his life.*

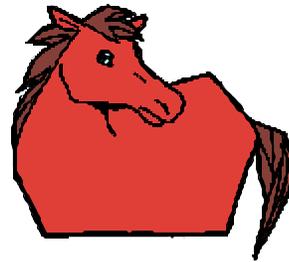
## **Writing or Discussion Topics**

\*\*Show the way that light is refracted through a prism. Talk about the difference that attitude has in finding a solution to a conflict. An open attitude can facilitate the viewing of an entire spectrum of solutions. Talk about the good and bad that can come from conflict. When is it best to avoid conflict? Read "The Zax" by Dr. Seuss and discuss the problem of desiring to win rather than desiring to solve the conflict.

\*\*There is an anonymous poem entitled, "Horse Sense:"

A horse can't pull while kicking  
This fact I merely mention.  
And he can't kick while pulling,  
Which is my chief contention.

Let's imitate the good old horse  
And lead a life that's fitting;  
Just pull an honest load, and then  
There'll be no time for kicking.<sup>11</sup>



Sometimes our own attitude makes the stress in a situation. The Serenity prayer says, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference." Talk about times of conflict when it is best just to adjust attitude. Discuss how much time and energy are often lost when the focus is on conflict instead of solving the problem and getting the job done.

\*\*Read "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost. Have students ask their parents how conflict is resolved in their neighborhoods and places of work. Discuss the responses in class. Discuss the statement: "Fences make good neighbors."

## **Role Plays**

\*\*Karin is doing a report on stamp collecting with 3 other students. Two of the students laugh and giggle during the appointed group time. Hardly any progress has been made on the report and it is due in two days. *What should Karin do?*

\*\*When Braxton returns from recess, he sees that his mechanical pencil is missing. This is the third pencil that has been taken from his desk in a week. He suspects that a student sitting two seats away has been the one taking his pencils. However, when Braxton asks his fellow student about the missing pencils, he denies knowing anything. *What should Braxton do?*

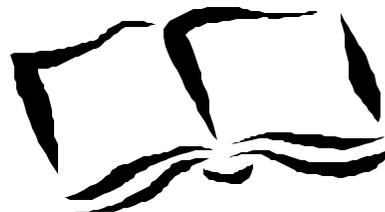
## **Book List**

*The Butter Battle Book* by Dr. Seuss

*Swimmy* by Leo Lionni

*The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles

*The Secret of the Peaceful Warrior* by Dan Millman



October: Courtesy

November: Dependability

December: Friendship

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.op97.k12.il.us/schools/julian/bio/> District 39 website

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.poetonline.com/oh14.html>



'Staying cool  
when the heat is on!'

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Conflict Resolution Word Scramble

1. TAORPOENOCI \_\_\_\_\_ an association of persons for mutual benefit
2. OLITGLIAESN \_\_\_\_\_ lawmaking
3. CIICNNTLAOIO \_\_\_\_\_ stresses the settlement of difference and the assuaging of ill feeling.
4. EGANTIEOT \_\_\_\_\_ to treat with another or others in order to come to terms or reach an agreement, to arrange or settle by conferring or discussing
5. TLIGONIITA \_\_\_\_\_ legal action or process
6. EORCPATEO \_\_\_\_\_ to work together toward a common end or purpose
7. DOANIMTIE \_\_\_\_\_ intervention, the attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement or compromise between disputing parties through the benevolent intervention of a neutral power
8. ULNOSTIO \_\_\_\_\_ the method or process of solving a problem
9. EIBARRATT \_\_\_\_\_ to judge or decide, to submit to settlement by a person chosen to settle the issue between parties engaged in a dispute or controversy
10. CIMKGEPANAE \_\_\_\_\_ settling the disputes of others
11. LOICCFTN \_\_\_\_\_ a prolonged battle, a struggle or clash
12. UICCATNEOMM \_\_\_\_\_ to make known, impart, to express oneself in such a way that one is readily and clearly understood
13. OSTNORULEI \_\_\_\_\_ a solution, reducing something to its constituent parts

**negotiate•communicate•arbitrate•cooperate•mediation•conciliation•legislation•litigation**

**conflict•resolution•solution•peacemaking•cooperation**

There are many ways to deal with stress, solve disagreements, or stay cool when the heat is on. Counting to 10; defining the problem with who, what, when, where, or why questions; communicating understanding with words and actions; ignoring insulting behavior; using respectful language; apologizing; and using humor (not at the other person's expense) are just a few ways of dealing with conflict. On the back of this paper, make your own list of conflict resolution skills and give an example of how each would be used.