

CRU

for Elementary School Conflict Managers

Excerpts from Training Manual

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ABOUT CRU *INSTITUTE*

CRU *INSTITUTE* was founded for the purpose of helping young people learn and use alternative dispute resolution skills at school as well as in their daily lives.

Experience and training make CRU *INSTITUTE* a unique organization. Since 1987, our trainers have conducted Student Mediation Training Programs at hundreds of schools throughout the United States. Today, the majority of these schools train their own students and continue the Student Mediation Program.

CRU *INSTITUTE* trainers are professional mediators who have conducted mediation training since 1980 for attorneys, mental health professionals, educators, and business people. They developed the School Mediation Program curriculum as an interesting, exciting way to teach young people the sophisticated mediation techniques used by adult mediators.

CRU *INSTITUTE* will continue to promote mediation as a conflict resolution skill with universal applicability. The ability to effectively deal with conflict is a life skill that everyone should possess. It is our goal to bring an understanding of the mediation process and techniques to as many young people as possible.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching young people to understand conflict and develop effective ways to deal with it is the purpose of this program.

This manual was prepared by CRU trainers and is based on many years' experience training students. The program can be used to train a core group of students to act as Conflict Managers on the playground or in the classroom for other students who have disputes or it may be offered to every student in the school, as Conflict Management includes many life skills that young people can use to resolve their day to day life problems. Training faculty and parents is a way to create a whole school program. The basic program includes these major teaching topics:

THE CONFLICT MANAGER PROCESS
CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CONFLICT
COMMUNICATION SKILLS
FEELINGS
MEDIATION TECHNIQUES
DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS
BEING YOUR OWN MEDIATOR

Conflict Manager Training is an interactive, action oriented program. It includes a series of demonstrations, exercises, interactive discussion with the students, and role play practice. The interactive nature of the program is especially important. When students struggle with new concepts, they tend to learn more.

How to Conduct the Training: The ideal room for the training is a large classroom or the school library. The students should be seated in chairs in a semi-circle. You will need a writing board and a TV-VCR for the first and fifth sessions.

The program is best presented by two trainers. However, one trainer may conduct the program using teacher volunteers to play the second trainer's role. The program is divided into six sessions. The basic training consists of the first five sessions. The remaining one is a follow-up session. The most effective way to teach the program is to present the first five sessions in a two or three week period and to present the last one six weeks to two months later, after the students have had a chance to practice the Conflict Manager Process in "real life."

Choosing Student Conflict Managers: Most elementary schools have classroom teachers nominate students to be Conflict Managers. It is prudent to choose students from the highest two or three grades in the school. For students younger than third grade, the program may need some modification. After teachers have selected several students from their class, the counselor or other person coordinating the program will choose the students to be trained.

Because "Conflict Manager Training" teaches students effective ways to deal with conflict, it is especially helpful to students who have inter-personal difficulties themselves. If you are training a core group of students to be Conflict Managers, it is important to choose some students to be trained who have anger management problems themselves and some who are shy and avoid conflict. You will also want to include a group of students who have well developed social skills. A cross section of students representing all socio-economic and racial groups in the school is important.

The ideal number of students for the training is twenty-five to thirty. In addition to training students, all playground teachers will benefit from the training. Playground teachers can be a great enhancement to the program if they understand the Conflict Management process and support the Conflict Managers.

The Program Coordinator: A pivotal person at each school is the Coordinator of the Conflict Manager Program. The Coordinator assigns teams of two students to be Conflict Managers and has regular consultation meetings with the Conflict Managers. The Coordinator can be a school counselor, a teacher or a playground teacher.

Many schools find that a "mini-training" of three hours is helpful for their entire faculty. In this "mini-training," the Conflict Manager process may be presented along with a few communication skills and mediation skills.

The goal of the Conflict Manager Training program is to teach young people that “slugging it out” or running to adults for “the answer” may not be the best way to deal with conflict. The philosophy of this program is that young people themselves can take responsibility for resolving their problems.

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THE CONFLICT MANAGER PROCESS

BEGINNING THE MEDIATION AND FINDING THE PROBLEM

- (1) Introduce yourself.
- (2) Ask the disputants, “Would you like help solving this problem?”
- (3) Move away from the scene of the conflict.
- (4) Tell the disputants, “You need to agree to five rules.”

Ask each disputant to agree to each rule.

- ... Don't interrupt
- ... No name calling or put downs
- ... Tell the truth
- ... Work to solve the problem
- ... No physical fighting

- (5) Tell one disputant, “ Please describe the problem.”
 - Restate
 - Ask, “How do you feel about the situation?”
- (6) Tell the other disputant, “ Please describe the problem.”
 - Restate
 - Ask, “How do you feel about the situation?”

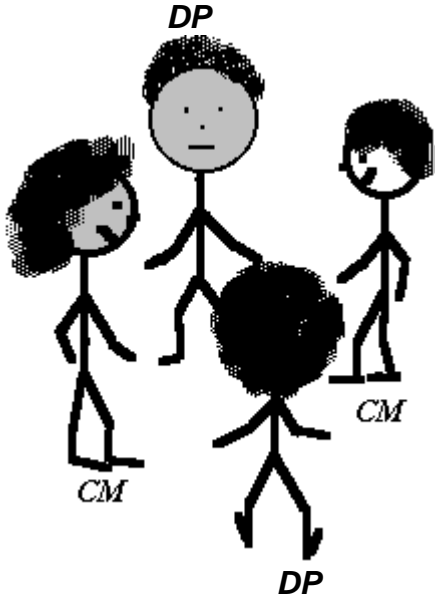
EXPLORING THE PROBLEM

EXPLORE: Ask, “What else can you tell us about this?”
“Why do you think this happened?”

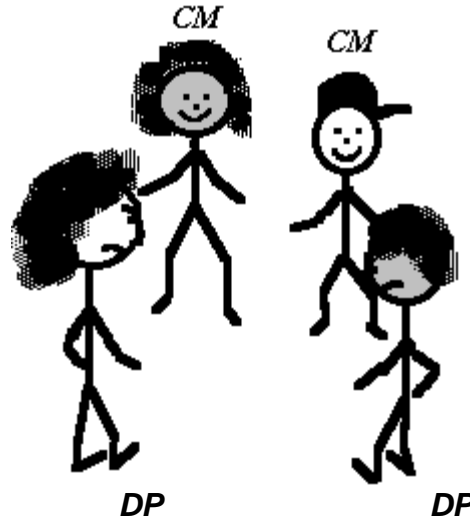
FINDING SOLUTIONS AND REACHING AGREEMENT

- (1) Ask each disputant for solutions.
- (2) When agreement is made:
 - Restate the agreement.
 - Write the agreement on the contract.
 - Ask the disputants to sign the contract.
 - Congratulate the disputants.

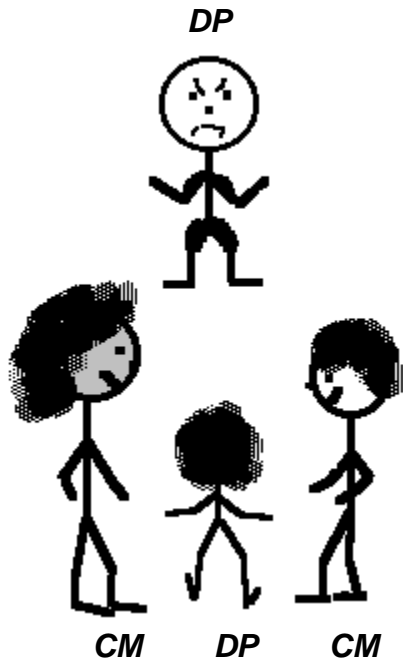
2. **Playground Positions:** Call four students up to the front of the class. Demonstrate and discuss each position illustrated and described in the handout, "Positions on the Playground." (A-18)



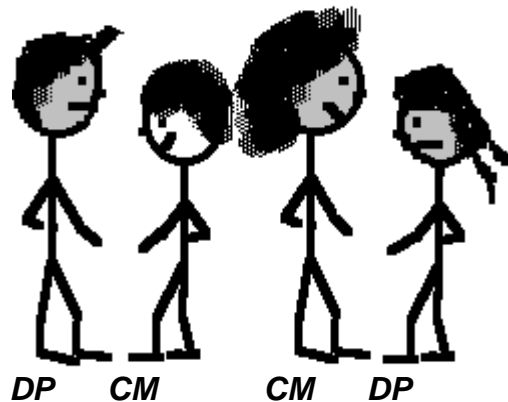
Good Balanced Arrangement



Managers in judgment positions. Disputants might fight



Balance of Power. Managers move to weaker disputant's side to give support cannot



Managers talk separately with disputants (caucus). Here disputants work out problem together

Balance the Power

Objective	Materials	Approximate Time
To demonstrate the technique of <i>Balance the Power</i> .	Chalkboard	5 minutes

Training Guide

“Balance the Power” is crucial to the mediation process if one disputant is so dominant that there cannot be a fair outcome. Many disputants are not totally equal, but they may still be able to create fair agreements. Students must realize that when you use this technique, you are losing neutrality. Therefore, it should be used with caution and only when necessary.

The video, “Everyday Conflicts, Creative Solutions”, demonstrates this technique. You can observe one of the Conflict Managers moving closer to Joey, the weaker disputant. The Conflict Managers needed to “Enforce the Rules” several times to help Balance the Power.

Teaching Points

- In order for the Conflict Management process to work, the disputants have to be relatively equal in power. It is the job of the Conflict Managers to help the disputants by Balancing the Power.
- If one disputant dominates the session, an unfair agreement may be reached.
- When this technique is used, the Conflict Managers might appear biased in favor of the weaker disputant. Therefore, this technique is used only when one disputant really dominates the other.

Procedure

1. Ask for a student volunteer to have a dispute with one of the trainers.
2. #1 Trainer = Conflict Manager
#2 Trainer = Trainer Disputant (acting as a student)
Student Volunteer = Student Disputant (pick a student who is shy/quiet).
3. Give the disputants the topic of their dispute. Tell the student to act shy.

TOPIC FOR DISPUTE:

Trainer Disputant wants to take Student Disputant's lunch money.

Trainer Disputant should be very powerful, and threatening to the Student Disputant, and should interrupt and speak in a loud voice.

4. During the demonstration, the Conflict Manager should:
 - Stand closer to the Student Disputant
 - Speak more softly to the Student Disputant and more firmly to the Trainer Disputant
 - Make sure the Student Disputant has his/her say
 - Enforce the rules especially with the Trainer Disputant
 - Assure the Student Disputant (if he/she doesn't want to talk) that this process is confidential.
5. Thank the volunteer.
6. Ask, "What was going on here?"

Questions for Discussion

(These questions are suggestions.

Use the ones you believe are appropriate and valuable for your class.)

1. What did I do as a Conflict Manager to balance the power?
2. Are there other ways to help balance the power?
3. Why is it important to the Conflict Management process to balance the power?

Being Your Own Mediator

Objective	Materials	Approximate Time
To teach students that Conflict Management techniques can be used in one to one negotiations.	Writing board, handout, “ <i>Being your Own Mediator</i> ” (A-25) and “ <i>Being Your Own Mediator-graphic</i> ” (A-26).	45 minutes

Training Guide

The structure and techniques taught as part of the Conflict Manager Process are life skills and can be used by everyone in their daily lives. This exercise will demonstrate how Conflict Managers can use mediation skills when they are “off duty” and when they are one of the disputants.

In addition to enumerating the various Conflict Management skills and processes that can be used in one to one negotiation, it is important to discuss with the class the difference between using the skills as a mediator and using them as one of the parties in a direct negotiation. The issue of neutrality takes on a different meaning when you, as the disputant, have something to personally gain or lose by the process.

Teaching Points

- Conflict Management structure and skills can be used in everyday life.
- You can be your own Conflict Manager by using what you have learned in mediation training when you have a dispute with another person.
- By using the Conflict Manager approach, you can influence the other person to change their approach to a more cooperative one.

Procedure

1. Tell the class that you have been talking about how they can help other people solve their disputes. We know that everybody has disputes, even you. Ask, “Can you think of ways that you could use Conflict Management skills when you are one of the disputants?”
2. Write the students’ suggestions on the board.
3. Discuss the importance of cooperation. It is hard to keep trying to pick a fight if the person you are trying to fight with won’t fight with you. So if you set your mind on cooperating and not making the fight worse, eventually the other person will cooperate with you.
4. Do a demonstration for the class of a “one to one” negotiation using Trainer #1 as the person who is “being his/her own mediator” and trainer #2 as the other person in the dispute who does not know mediation skills and (at first) does not want to cooperate. **GO THROUGH THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS STEP BY STEP.**

BEING YOUR OWN MEDIATOR

A. FINDING OUT WHAT THE PROBLEM IS

- (1) Find out what the problem is from the other person’s point of view.
 - ...Use listening skills to fully understand what the other person has said.
 - ...Restate what the other person has said.
- (2) Say what you think the problem is.
- (3) If there is more than one problem, suggest that you work on one at a time.

B. EXPLORING THE PROBLEM

- (4) If you need to choose one problem to begin talking about, choose one that the other person wants to talk about.
- (5) When discussing each problem, use these Conflict Management skills:
 - ... 'I' Messages
 - ...Listening skills: restating, eye contact, open ended questions
 - ...Avoid bringing up dirty laundry
 - ...Do not call names or interrupt
- (6) If the other person calls you names or interrupts, suggest that you will both agree to rules (no interrupting and no name calling).
- (7) If you get stuck, use, "What will happen if...?"

C. FINDING SOLUTIONS AND REACHING AGREEMENT

- (8) After fully discussing the problem, look for solutions.
 - ...Ask the other person for solutions
 - ...If none of their solutions work for you, suggest a change to their solution or suggest another.
 - ...If you still can't agree, Brainstorm.
- (9) When you have an agreement, summarize it. Write it down if it is complicated or if you want a more formal agreement that you can both sign.

5. Ask the class: “What was I doing here?” Write the answers on the board. Go through the steps of “Being Your Own Mediator” outlined below.

A. Finding out what the problem is

- Ask the other person, “Could you tell me what the problem is?” or “What is bothering you?” or “Could you tell me why you seem so angry?”
- Use listening skills to fully understand what the other person says.
- Restate what the other person has said.

Say what you think the problem is.

- Describe the problem in a non-threatening way using ‘I’ Messages and not ‘You’ Accusations.
- Be as clear as you can when you describe the problem

B. Exploring the problem

Suggest that the two of you work on the problems one at a time.

If you need to choose one problem to begin talking about, choose one that the other person wants to talk about.

Discuss one problem at a time. Be sure to use these Conflict Management skills:

- ‘I’ Messages
- Listening skills: restating, eye contact, open ended questions
- Avoid bringing up dirty laundry
- Do not call names or interrupt

If the other person calls you names or interrupts, suggest that the two of you make a rule that you won’t name call or interrupt while you are discussing this problem.

If you get stuck ask, “What do you think will happen if we can’t solve this problem?”

C. Finding solutions and reaching agreement

After the problem has been fully discussed, look for solutions.

- Ask the other person for solutions to the problem.
- If none of the other person’s solutions will work for you, suggest a change to their solution or suggest a new solution. (Try to think of how your solution will affect the other person as well as yourself)
- If no solutions are found that you can both agree to, try Brainstorming.

When you have an agreement, summarize or restate what you have agreed to. If it is very complicated or you want it to be more formal, write it down and make a contract that you can both sign.

6. Discuss with the class how virtually all of the techniques you use as a neutral Conflict Manager can also be used to help solve your own disputes. The trick is to learn how to use Conflict Manager skills when you are one of the disputants, and to not allow the other disputant to get you into a fight.

Small Group Role Play Practice:

Break students into small groups and tell them to practice “Being Your Own Mediator” with a partner.

Each person can practice by using the graphic outline of being your own mediator. The person using the graphic pretends to know about mediation, and the partner pretends not to know about mediation. Tell the students to make up a dispute.

After the students have had a chance to role play, have the groups come together and discuss how they used mediation skills and how the negotiations went. Ask two or three pairs to demonstrate their role play for the class.

Distribute handout “Being Your Own Mediator” and “Being Your Own Mediator (graphic)” Alternatively, you can give each student a handout booklet at the end of the training.