

Lesson 2

Conflict Resolution and Diversity (Hate Comes Home)



Key Terms

anti-Semitism
bigotry
hate-related words
prejudice
racism
scapegoating
stereotype

What You Will Learn to Do

- Develop strategies for resolving conflict in a diverse, multicultural setting

Linked Core Abilities

- Do your share as a good citizen in your school, community, country, and the world
- Treat self and others with respect

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Assess how age, race, ethnicity, gender, and other aspects of diversity impact perceptions of self and others
- Compare two or more points of view and the reasons behind them
- Clarify particular points of disagreement and agreement
- Identify appropriate intervention guidelines
- Identify techniques for reducing conflict within a diverse population
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Key Note Terms

stereotype – a formulated conception, notion, or attitude

scapegoating – the action of blaming an individual or group for something when, in reality, there is no one person or group responsible for the problem; it targets another person or group as responsible for problems in society because of that person's group identity

bigotry – bitter, intolerant, and prejudice

anti-Semitism – feeling or showing hostility towards Jews; persecuting Jews

Introduction

Although acts of bias such as stereotyping, jokes, labeling, and racist comments may seem harmless, they form the foundation for feelings of hate that ultimately can lead to prejudice, discrimination, violence, and genocide. History provides examples of the ways in which **stereotyping, scapegoating, bigotry, anti-Semitism**, dehumanization, and discrimination can escalate to murders. This section explores how acts of bias can lead to conflict, and how confronting bias can help to avoid violence.

Note

To learn more about scapegoating and anti-Semitism, check out the Anti-Defamation League's Web site at www.adl.org. The ADL monitors hate groups around the world and is a good resource for Holocaust information.

Hate-Motivated Behavior

Hate-motivated behavior is an act or attempted act intended to cause emotional suffering, physical injury, or property damage through intimidation, harassment, bigoted slurs or epithets, force or threat of force, or vandalism motivated in part or in whole by hostility toward the victim's real or perceived ethnicity, national origin, immigrant status, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, political affiliation, or race. Or, simply defined, it is an expression of hostility against a person or property because of the victim's race, religion, disability, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation that does not meet the necessary elements required to prove a crime. This definition provides a common definition that enables schools and law enforcement agencies to develop a reporting system to document these behaviors. These acts may not be considered crimes or hate crimes but should be reported and considered as serious as a hate crime because they can be as emotionally damaging as any hate crime and can have long-lasting effects on students and teachers.

Students must take responsibility for their own behavior and meet the standards of conduct established by their schools and society in general. Bullying is perhaps the most underrated problem in our schools and can be motivated by prejudice, intolerance, or hate. Bullying can include name-calling, teasing, harassment, extortion of lunch money, harsh pranks, or jostling in a hallway. Victims often are left with emotional scars long after the incident. Reducing hate-motivated behavior requires selfless acts by teachers as well as students.

The *Hate Comes Home* program is a virtual-experience interactive CD-ROM that allows students to become the lead character in a plot immersed in everyday occurrences of bias and hate-motivated behavior. It includes a discussion of the distinction between hate crimes and hate bias incidents as well as a Culture Tree graphic exercise. By participating in the Culture Tree exercise, students will spend time identifying how one's own personal behavior reinforces or combats prejudice. Students will also discuss the many roles that people can find themselves faced

with when a bias act occurs, for example, sometimes they perpetuate prejudice, sometimes they observe others acting in a prejudiced manner, and sometimes they are the victims of prejudice. Only then can students begin to develop skills to confront prejudice and discrimination in their schools and communities.

Hate Crimes Statistics

Hate crimes are crimes committed against individuals or groups or property based on the real or perceived characteristics of the victims. These crimes have been plaguing our country for centuries, tearing at the very foundation of our country and destroying our neighborhoods and communities. Hate crime statutes vary from state to state and may cover bias-motivated crimes based on religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, national origin, or ethnicity of the victims. In 2002, 7,462 hate crimes, involving 9,222 victims, were reported to the FBI. Schools increasingly have a legal, as well as moral, responsibility for combating hate crimes because so many of the perpetrators and victims are of school age. According to a 2001 Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report,

- **33 percent of all known hate crime offenders were under 18; another 29 percent of all hate crime offenders were 18 to 24**
- **30 percent of all victims of bias-motivated aggravated assaults and 34 percent of the victims of simple assault were under 18.**

Hate behavior generates humiliation, shock, outrage, fear, and anxiety in the victim and in the victim's community. When such an incident occurs at school, the entire school community experiences a loss of safety. Feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, and alienation become common. Ultimately, these feelings produce a negative school climate where not only is school safety questioned, but also learning is disrupted and instruction is preoccupied with classroom management. According to the National Center for Education Statistics,

- **In 2001, 12 percent of students ages 12 through 18 reported that someone at school had used hate-related words against them in the previous six months.**
- **In both 1999 and 2001, 36 percent of students saw hate-related graffiti at school.**

Why Diversity Matters

Diversity matters to every living human being. When a group or segment of the population is excluded or oppressed, everyone is denied. For communities to not only survive, but also to thrive, each person needs to be aware and sensitive to *all* the members of the community. When all segments of a community are respected and utilized, it benefits everyone involved. How many different cultures are represented in Figure 7.2.1?

America is the most diverse nation in the world. Our ethnicity, religion, life experiences, and so on make each of us unique. It is beneficial to everyone to learn to accept what is different and respect it.

Key Note Term

hate-related words – derogatory words having to do with race, religion, ethnicity, ability, gender, or sexual orientation

Figure 7.2.1: Diversity is an important part of our society.

Courtesy of C. J. Allen/Stock Boston.



Hate, Stereotypes, and Racism

You might have seen the bumper sticker, “Hate Isn’t a Family Value.” No one is born with hatred or **prejudice** toward another person; hate, stereotypes, and **racism** are learned behaviors and feelings. Sometimes human beings have negative feelings toward another simply because they are different. Sometimes cultural dress, actions, and attitudes are misunderstood and misinterpreted. Other times, a news story about a single individual might sway your opinion about an entire group of people. Was the young man in Figure 7.2.2 born with hatred toward other races?

Knowledge and information are the most powerful tools you have at your disposal to combat hate, stereotypes, and racism. How can you learn about other cultures and combat racism and stereotyping?

- **Know your roots and share your pride in your heritage with others.**
- **Celebrate holidays with extended family and friends. Use such opportunities to encourage storytelling and share personal experiences across generations.**

Figure 7.2.2: Prejudice is a learned behavior.

Courtesy of Paul Brou/Picture Group, Inc.



- **Invite friends from backgrounds different from your own to experience the joy of your traditions and customs.**
- **Be mindful of your language; avoid stereotypical remarks and challenge those made by others.**
- **Speak out against jokes and slurs that target people or groups. Silence sends a message that you are in agreement. It is not enough to refuse to laugh.**
- **Be knowledgeable; provide as much accurate information as possible to reject harmful myths and stereotypes. Discuss the impact of prejudicial attitudes and behavior.**
- **Read books that promote understanding of different cultures as well as those that are written by authors of diverse backgrounds.**

Why Conflict Occurs

Conflict can arise for the smallest and most insignificant of reasons. One person makes an off-handed racial slur or a disparaging comment about someone's cultural background. Heated words are exchanged, tempers flare, conflicts escalate, and, all too often, violence results. And when conflict arises, many teens feel they have no choice but to fight. Although conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, they do not have to lead to violence.

When you try to resolve conflicts and disagreements, you find that conflicts don't have to be avoided, nor do they necessarily lead to violence. Conflict can actually be a positive force in your life; it can provide you with an opportunity to take a close look at yourself, your attitudes, and your beliefs. If resolved positively, conflicts can actually help strengthen relationships and build greater understanding of yourself and those around you.

Conflict Management and Resolution

Conflicts can be managed and resolved through several different options. Sometimes it's best to combine methods to get the problem solved and avoid the conflict from escalating to a violent end. The following sections discuss some conflict management and resolution solutions available to you.

Win-Win Approach

The win-win approach is about changing the conflict from adversarial attack and defense, to cooperation. It is a powerful shift of attitude that alters the whole course of communication (see Figure 7.2.3).

While people battle over opposing solutions (such as "Do it my way!" "No, that's no good! Do it my way!"), the conflict is a power struggle. What you need to do is change the agenda in the conversation. The win-win approach says "I want to win and I want you to win, too." A win-win approach rests on the following strategies:

Figure 7.2.3: By working together and learning about different groups, tolerance can replace prejudice.

Courtesy of David Young-Wolff/PhotoEdit.



- **Going back to underlying needs: Why did the conflict start and what will the outcome resolve?**
- **Recognition of individual differences**
- **Openness to adapting one's position in the light of shared information and attitudes**
- **Attacking the problem, not the people**

Compromise is usually the key to the win-win approach. Even if the conflicting parties simply agree to disagree, everyone wins.

Creative Response Approach

The creative response to conflict is about turning problems into possibilities. It is about consciously choosing to see what can be done rather than staying with a bad situation. It is affirming that you will choose to extract the best from the situation.

You can take a conflict and turn it into an opportunity for discussion and healthy debate.

Appropriate Assertiveness Approach

The essence of appropriate assertiveness is being able to state your case without arousing the defenses of the other person. The secret of success lies in saying how it is for you rather than what the other person should or shouldn't do. Attaching the statement "The way I see it . . .," can help tremendously. A skilled "I" statement goes even further. When you want to state your point of view helpfully, the "I" statement formula can be useful. An "I" statement says how it is on my side, how I see it.

Use an "I" statement when you need to let the other person know you are feeling strongly about an issue. Others often underestimate how hurt, angry, or put out you are, so it's useful to say exactly what's going on for you. What you can realistically expect is that an appropriate "I" statement made with good intent

- **Is highly unlikely to do any harm**
- **Is a step in the right direction**
- **Is sure to change the current situation in some way**
- **Can/will open up to possibilities you may not yet see**

Empathy

Empathy is about rapport and openness between people. When it is absent, people are less likely to consider your needs and feelings. The best way to build empathy is to help the other person feel that they are understood. That means being an active listener.

There are specific listening activities relevant to different situations: information, affirmation, or inflammation. Use active listening when offering advice won't help. To use active listening:

- **Don't ignore or deny the other party's feelings.**
- **Read the nonverbal as well as the verbal communication to assess feelings.**
- **Check back with the other party about their feelings as well as the content even though they may only be telling you about the content. If you're not sure how they feel, ask them "How do you feel about that?" or "How did that affect you?"**
- **Reflect back what you hear them saying so they can hear it themselves.**
- **Reflect back to them what you hear them saying so they know you understand.**
- **If you get it wrong, ask an open question and try again, such as "How do you see the situation?"**

When you empathize, you let the other person know that you're trying to relate and understand how they feel and what brought them to the point of conflict.

Manage Emotions

People's behavior occurs for a purpose. They might be looking for ways to belong, feel significant, or self-protect. When people perceive a threat to their self-esteem, a downward spiral can begin. People can be led into obstructive behaviors in the faulty belief that this will gain them a place of belonging and significance. How you respond to their difficult behaviors can determine how entrenched these become.

The secret is to break out of the spiral by supporting their real needs without supporting their destructive faulty beliefs and alienating patterns of reaction. Convince them that you respect their needs. Build trusting relationships and support their need for justice and fairness.

Conclusion

The world is made up of many different kinds of people from different cultures, races, ethnic backgrounds, creeds, and religions. As the world gets smaller and smaller, the ability to resolve conflict in a multicultural society becomes more and more important. The first step to conflict resolution is to understand different cultures and backgrounds and get rid of racial bias and prejudice. From there, conflict resolution can happen through several different methods.

In the following lesson, you will learn about mediation and the skills it takes to mediate a situation.

Lesson Review

1. Explain why diversity matters to every human being.
2. Define the term *anti-Semitism*.
3. Choose a conflict management and resolution method and discuss it. Have you ever used this method to resolve a conflict?
4. What is a hate crime? Why do hate crimes occur?