



Lesson 1: Cooperation: The Golden Key

Objectives:

To introduce the Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding curriculum
To introduce the importance of cooperation as an underlying building block of conflict resolution education
To become aware of the differences between cooperation, competition and “win-win” thinking.

Materials:

Approximately 10 foot piece of rope
Gold-colored key

Why Should I Teach This?:

This lesson is the first in a series of lessons in our Conflict Resolution Education After School Curriculum. New to you as the facilitator and teacher and new to the students, we are embarking on a unique journey which will clearly help youth get along better with one another in their schools and communities.

This lesson will introduce the broad idea of creating a peaceful community through the use of effective conflict resolution and communication skills. Moreover, lessons 2 and 3 will continue to thread in the benefits of becoming “conflict masters and peace builders.”

The thrust of this lesson is to help students buy in to the need to work on conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills in fun, creative ways. Another focus of this lesson is understanding that cooperation is key to unlocking the minds and the hearts of others so that we can continue to create a more peaceful, less violent world.

Getting Ready:

Think through 3 conflicts that would be appropriate to share with students. Be sure each of your conflicts are short (about 10–20 seconds long), to the point and interesting for students to listen to.

Vocabulary:

Focused pause: Time to think for a few moments before giving a response

Cooperation: To work together in a trustful and helpful manner toward the same outcome

Competition: To work toward the same or a different outcome without cooperation, trust and helpfulness with each other

Win–win thinking: Thinking that both people use, which results in both persons being satisfied with the outcome

Let's Go!:

Part A:

Ensure that students are in chairs in a circle, with your chair always being a part of the circle.

Using eye contact with all students, enthusiastically and warmly go around the circle with your eyes and verbally welcome students to the first meeting of what will become a regular gathering of “Conflict Masters and Peacebuilders” in the Afterschool Program at _____ Elementary School.

Say:

Welcome to our first Peace Circle, one of many that we will meet in together during our After School program this semester!

Introduce yourself and tell or remind students (if shared already with them) what prompted your interest in working and learning –together– with students who are in the Afterschool Program. Be certain to be positive and upbeat about your interest in working with the students.

We will be gathering here ___ times a week, for about 30 minutes each time. I am very happy to share with you that each time we gather here together we will be learning about how to better get along with each other through the use of what is called “conflict resolution skills.” As you may know, conflict is often another way of saying “disagreements with others.”

With a show of hands (you raise your hand to let students know you want them to respond by raising their hand), **how many of you right here in this circle would agree that conflicts happen a lot in life?**

Yes, conflicts happen everyday, and in every way. I would like to share a little bit about myself with you right now so you will begin to get to know me a little better during our peace circles together. How I am going to do this is to share with you several conflicts that I experienced just today.

Share with students the 3 short conflicts that you thought of during the “Getting Ready” section of this lesson. Be sure each of your conflicts is short (about 10–20 seconds long,) to the point and interesting for students to listen to.

Now say:

**Let’s have some fun and use our bodies!
When we think-together-of conflict or disagreements, let’s act out standing in front of our seats (not moving around the room) what conflict looks or feels like.**

Physically model for students an example, such as folded arms over chest with a frown.

Introduce the idea of a “focused pause” to students at this time.

Say:

Since I showed you one of my ideas about what conflict could look or feel like AND I had time to think about what I was going to do earlier when I prepared this lesson, I now want you to do something that you will hear me say often during our Peace Circles. I want you to take what I call a “focused pause” before showing us what your answer will be. A focused pause is simply this: being able to think for a few moments before giving a response so your response will be exactly what you want to relay. So, right now let’s all think quietly together about what our body language will show when I say “show what conflict looks or feels like.”

Use this opportunity to have the students think for approximately 15 seconds in silence and get used to the idea of a “focused pause” which will be used in other lessons.

Say:

Okay. Now, use your body language to show us “conflict.” Go!

Comment in nonjudgmental and affirming ways about some of the students’ body configurations. Allow a minute or so to hear other students’ comments as well.

Say:

Now, I would like you to take another focused pause and while you do, I would like you to show each of us what “peace” might look like or feel like. Give a 15 second focused pause with no talking.

Okay. Now, use your body language to show us “peace.” Go!

Comment in nonjudgmental and affirming ways about some of the students’ body configurations for “peace,” and how they differ from “conflict.” Allow a minute or so to hear other students’ comments as well.

Say:

It's important to note that there is a big difference between "conflict" and "peace." We will explore the idea of a Peace Circle (which is what we are presently sitting in) and conflict in lessons in the very near future. Be sure to keep in your mind for the future how "conflict" and "peace" felt and looked when your fellow students and you acted it out.

Part B:

Say:

Now, let's switch gears and talk about something related to peace and conflict but not about peace and conflict. Would you all please "switch gears" with me?

Note: All people, especially youth, love novelty.

Throughout the curriculum, there will times that novelty, kinesthetics, deductive inquiry, anticipation and surprise will be modeled by you because it has been proven in brain research to greatly stimulate and enrich learning and create a fun and engaging aspect to teaching and learning.

Now, kinesthetically "switch gears" in front of the students, by mimicking a race car driver switching gears. Include sounds, if you're inclined, as students love the novelty!

Invite students to quickly switch gears with you, using their bodies and sounds. Keep students on track, but enjoy engaging them.

Say:

What does it mean to cooperate?

Acknowledge each response.

Cooperate means to work-together-toward the same thing. Another way of saying the same thing is "mutual goals." In order to do this, we need to be able to trust, help and share with each other.

Cooperation also helps us build a sense of community and good feelings about each other, Raise your hand if you agree with this. (Impromptu handraising keeps students engaged with your teaching.)

Would you also agree that often, in our western world (in our schools, on T.V, in the media, in our cities and communities) we are set up to compete with each other instead of cooperate with one another?

Competition is the opposite of cooperation. Competitive situations are very likely to create conflict.

Take out the 10 foot piece of rope from your “Get Ready!” materials. Unroll the rope dramatically. Ask students what they think you are going to do with the rope. After a few guesses, ask for a volunteer.

Give her/him one end of the rope and you take the other. Begin to pull on your end. Naturally, the student will pull on her/his end too. Pull harder, dramatizing the competition that is immediately beginning to unfold.

Say:

Does anyone have an idea how to move this competitive drama to something more cooperative and peaceful?

Take student responses. After responses, remind students (if they have not thought of this as an idea) that you and the student could have spoken to each other to find out why each of you wanted the rope, thus creating a “win-win” solution. This would allow both of you to have the rope for what is needed, even if you both possess the rope at different times to meet your needs.

Briefly touch on the fact that competition is not necessarily bad, and that conflict is often necessary for growth (This will be learned in more depth in Lesson 4: The Conflict Web.)

Say to students:

Cooperation, the ability to get along, trust and help one another, can be thought of as the “golden key” to unlocking the hearts and minds of people just like you and me.

(Dramatically take the key out of your pocket at this moment. Hesitate. Then say:)

This golden key of cooperation—the ability to listen, trust, get along and help one another, will unlock hearts and minds (pantomime the key unlocking your heart and your mind) so as to create more peaceful, less competitive schools and communities.

Does this sound reasonable to you?

Raise your hand if it does?

Say to students:

It's important for you to know that for conflict to lead toward growth, it must be responded to in a “win-win” fashion, similar to the example I shared with you (or if students had other win-win style examples, use their examples too as positive ways to be cooperative.)

Part C:

Say:

For our final activity today, let's practice cooperation as a group! The name of this fun game is “The Line Forms Here.”

Here's how it goes:

Everyone please stand quietly and stay at your seats. In a moment, I am going to ask everyone of you to show your cooperation skills –skills that show working together, trusting and helping each other.

Here's how it goes. Without talking at all, I would like each of you to create one long line in this room with your bodies, going from the tallest person in the room to the shortest person.

Begin now.

Students should spend no more than 3 minutes on this activity. Afterward and as they are in line, ask these questions:

Say:

How did you cooperate (help one another and work together) with each other?

What problems, if any, did you encounter?

How did you—as a team, together— make this a “win-win” situation, rather than a competition?

Part D: Sum It Up!

Have students return to their seats. Review the concepts learned today. Get students involved by requesting that, as a group, they repeat aloud and in unison, each new peace circle learning after you say it:

- **Cooperation means to work together toward the same goal while helping, sharing and trusting each other. It is the key to opening hearts and minds to create more peaceful schools and communities.**
- **A peaceful community is one where cooperation among people is the norm.**
- **The opposite of cooperation is competition and competition can be healthy and good if it involves “win-win” thinking.**