



Strategies for Conflict Mediation

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Mediating Conflict Effectively

The good container for
facilitating growth

Pre-Conflict Strategies

There is a lot we can do to prepare the soil for Conflict Management. Dedicating time to teaching them about our brains, about our reactivity, about how social media can also keep our Amygdala in our Limbic system overly-reactive.

It's important to talk about these things with empathy – towards them AND ourselves.

It is not really the students' fault that they use too much social media.

They are the first generation to be in this situation and we adults were not prepared to help them truly navigate it.



What they need to know



The importance of good sleep hygiene – it affects everything we do



That conflict is inevitable as we are all unique people, with different perspectives, experiences, expectations



That conflict generates many emotions all at once which can confuse our rational brain



That conflict is often an opportunity to get more "real", to clear up any confusion, to even become better friends

Step 1: Acknowledge it

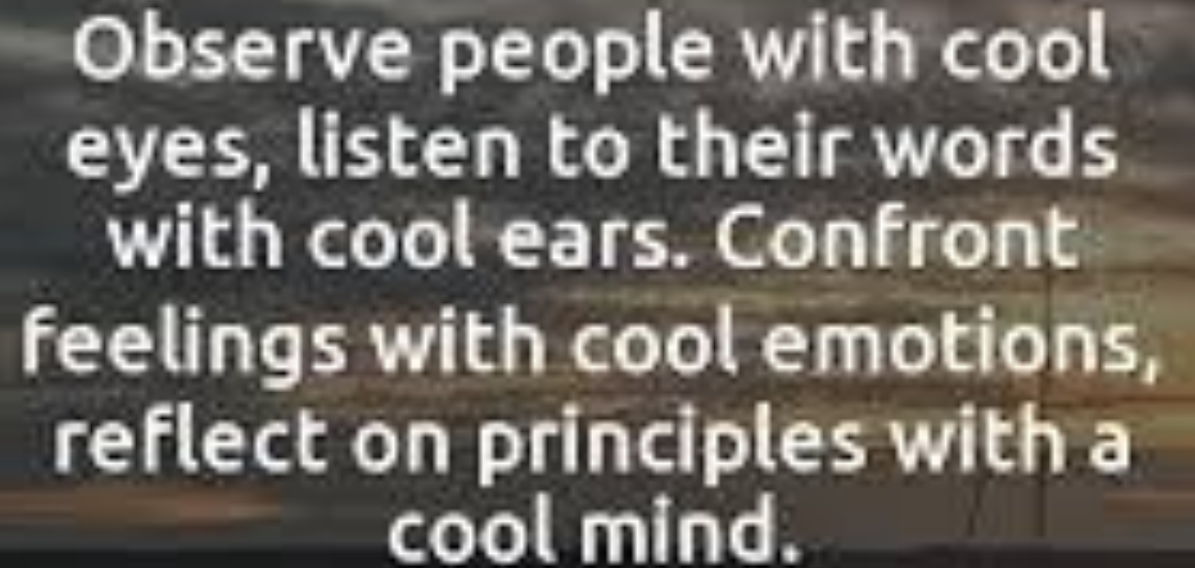
Don't avoid the conflict!

Conflict can make us feel uncomfortable and fearful of escalation, of destroying relationships, of losing face.

However, avoiding it means lack of authenticity, bad energy, division among staff, lower motivation, even increased absenteeism.

All of this affects the school environment and well-being.

Openly (but discreetly) acknowledging the normalcy and inevitability of conflict takes some of its negative power away!

A quote by Zicheng Hong is presented in white text against a dark, blurred background of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The quote reads: 'Observe people with cool eyes, listen to their words with cool ears. Confront feelings with cool emotions, reflect on principles with a cool mind.'

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Zicheng Hong

www.idlehearts.com

Step 2: Let parties cool down

In the heat of the moment, the emotional brain is doing all the talking. Give the pre-frontal cortex time to process the experience by slowing down the emotional brain.

Good strategies

- Let them change environment (walk around school, go to the bathroom)
 - Create a quiet corner in classroom or school to cool down
 - Let them color, draw, use their hands to cool down
 - Ask them to write or draw what happened
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Step 3: Meet with parties individually

Give each party a chance to sit down with you and meet for a one-on-one chat. Take notes and ask *open* questions. Stay neutral but empathetic.

Give them time to talk about

1. their perspective on the conflict (who, when, how, why, where)
2. how it affects them
3. If and how they have tried to resolve the problem
4. Possible steps they think could be taken to resolve it

Remember: the people with the problem are usually the people with the solution! They will be more motivated to follow through if it is their idea!



Step 4: Mediation

Invite the two parties to join you for a meeting about the conflict they are experiencing.

Your energy is important. Think of yourself as a **vehicle** for their conflict management, **not as a judge** but as a mirror for them to see their conflict reflected back.

With kids, it can be useful to ask them to describe the experience while you draw it. That redirects their energy to something concrete and keeps them in contact with their rational brain.



Mediation - continued

Show appreciation for their willingness to confront the conflict and acknowledge that it can be difficult to do so.

Thank them for their desire to find a solution and for their **growth mindset**.

Introduce the issue with a statement like,

“We are here to discuss your view on how to / on what happened when / on the episode... and have an open, frank conversation on your experience, listening actively, and then seeing what kinds of steps can be taken to work together in a more satisfying way.”

A pair of hands is shown holding a circular lens. The lens is held in a way that it frames a scene of a path leading through a forest. The path is made of gravel and is flanked by tall, dry grasses or reeds. The forest has many thin, vertical trees, and the lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day. The background behind the hands is a blurred green, likely foliage.

Describe both perspectives

Describe what you have been told. Be aware of your tone, eye contact and non-verbal communication. The idea is to be **neutral** yet **interested** and confident that talking about it will help clarify and release some tension.

Ask for confirmation of what you are describing as well as further clarification if they object to your description.

“If I understand correctly, Mary perceived this as....”

“Don’t hesitate to clarify if my description is incorrect.”

Offer both parties a chance to speak

Assure them both that both parties will be able to speak for a set time (usually 2 or 3 minutes) and will not be interrupted. Ask that they use I-statements and describe how they experienced the situation. This helps each party “stay in their garden” and avoids loaded “You-statements”.

In other words:

“I felt upset about not being included in the reorganization meeting and not being able to voice my concerns.”

INSTEAD OF *“No one told me about the meeting because YOU had already decided everything and didn’t want me involved!”*

Offer them a rebuttal

Once both parties have spoken, allow them time to respond (1 or 2 minutes)

Again, encourage “I-statements” and remind them if they slip into “You” or “Always!” “Never!” absolute statements.

Summarize
what you
have heard

This slows down their emotional brain, shows them that you were listening attentively, mirrors back their experience, and just generally allows them time to reflect.

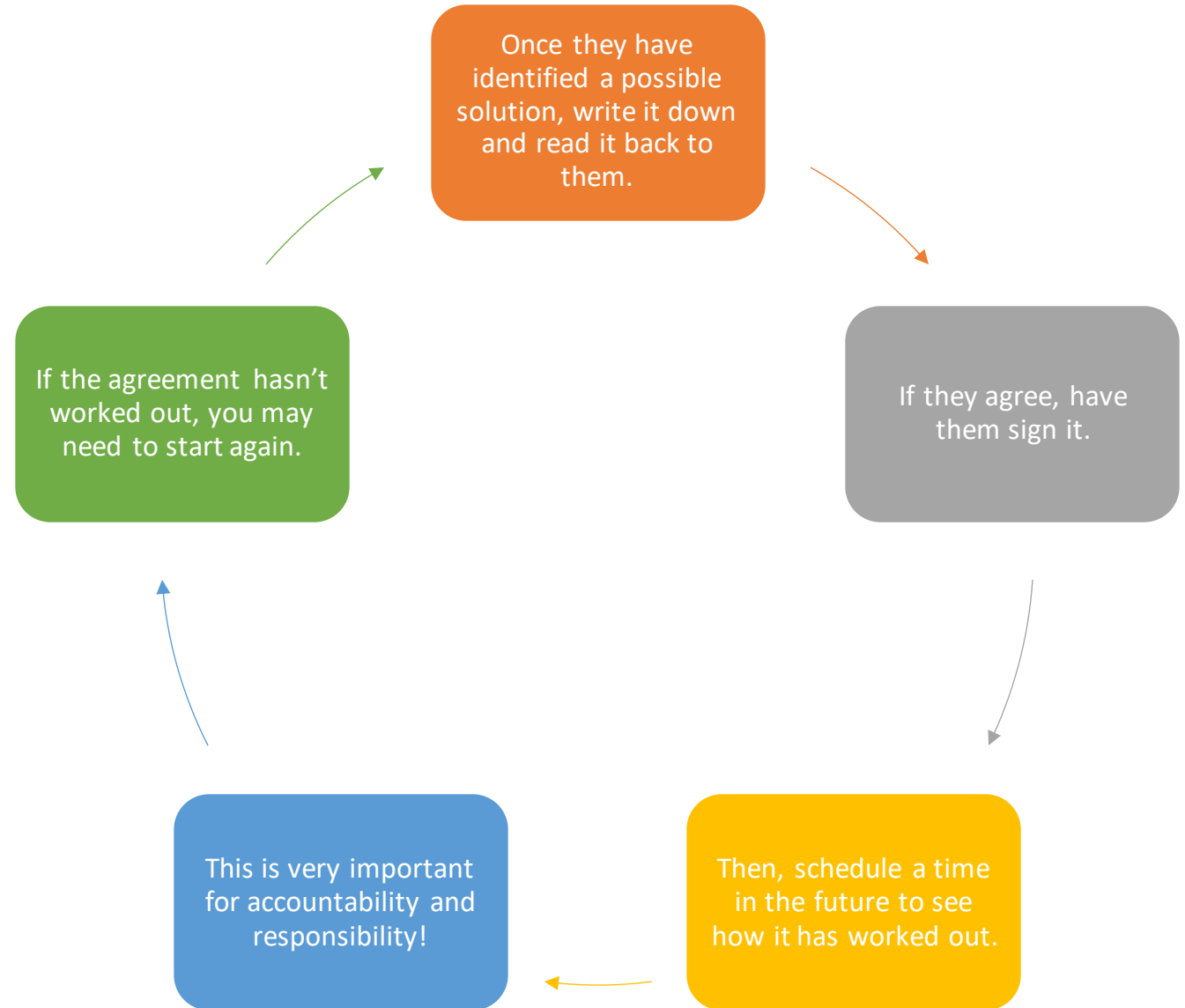


Explore possible solutions

Now that the problem is more clearly defined, they should be able to brainstorm possible solutions.

Their rational brain and emotional brain have communicated more clearly, and they are now ready for problem solving.

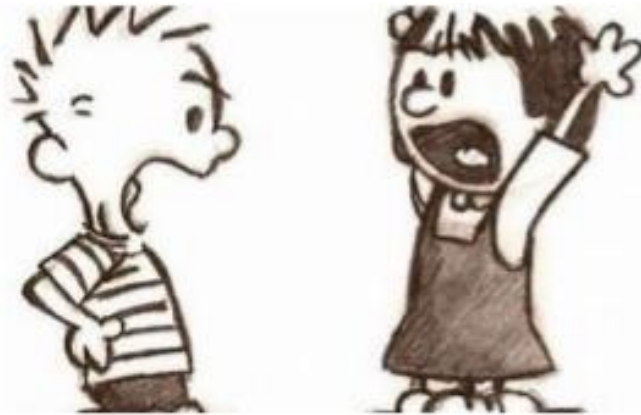
Write down an agreement



MEDIATION PROCESS

Ground rules

- ♥ Confidential
- ♥ Dialogue
- ♥ One person at a time
- ♥ "I" statements
- ♥ Solution-focused conversation



- 🧱 Statement of the issues (recap)
- 🧱 Definition of the issues (why is this causing such conflict)
- 🧱 Developing alternatives that are realistic, attainable and agreeable
- 🧱 Conclusion/Compromise/Agreement
- 🧱 Follow-up / Formalize Agreement