

CRU

for Elementary School Conflict Mediators



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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, many of whom are professional mediators, 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 is useful for us all. 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, faculty and parents. The program can be used to train a core group of students to act as Conflict Mediators on the playground, in a private room, or in the classroom for other students who have disputes or it may be offered to every student in the school. Training faculty and parents is a way to create a whole school program. The basic program includes these major teaching topics:

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

Conflict Mediator 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 audio-visual equipment.

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 Mediator Process in "real life."

Choosing Student Conflict Mediators: Most elementary schools have classroom teachers nominate students to be Conflict Mediators. 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 Mediation 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 Mediators, 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 majority 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 Mediation process and support the Conflict Mediators.

The Program Coordinator: A pivotal person at each school is the Coordinator of the Conflict Mediator Program. The Coordinator assigns teams of two students to be Conflict Mediators and has regular consultation meetings with the Conflict Mediators. 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 Mediator process may be presented along with a few communication skills and mediation skills.

The goal of the Conflict Mediator 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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Active Listening

Objective	Materials	Approximate Time
To demonstrate good listening skills and explain why listening is important for Conflict Mediators.	Writing board, handout “ <i>Communication: Active Listening.</i> ” (A-13)	15 minutes

Training Guide

This demonstration models various active listening skills for the students. The exercise is most effective when the student volunteer is a secure person who will be sensitive to the trainer’s ‘wrong way’ demonstration, but will not be devastated by it. The trainer should demonstrate very clearly the ‘wrong way’ and ‘right way’.

It is important to include in this section information and discussion on the differences between the way people from different cultural backgrounds communicate. Although classifying all people of a certain group as being exactly the same is a mistake, there do seem to be tendencies for many people within a cultural group to deal with communication in similar ways.

The video tape, “Everyday Conflicts, Creative Solutions” is a useful way to illustrate the active listening skills taught in this section. The Conflict Mediators in the video use all of the skills including restating, “So what you’re saying is.....” and asking open-ended questions, “What else can you guys tell us about what happened?”

Teaching Points

- The entire mediation process depends on active listening.
- Active listening consists of eye contact, nodding, not interrupting, asking relevant/open ended questions, and restating.
- Active listening validates the speaker.
- Active listening creates an atmosphere in which people feel comfortable speaking. It builds trust.

Procedure

1. Ask for a volunteer to come to the front and tell you about a movie or a TV show. While the student is speaking, demonstrate POOR listening by:
 - not making eye contact
 - showing no interest
 - yawning
 - interrupting
 - talking about a movie or a show you saw
 - asking “yes-no” questions (e.g. Did you like the movie? Was the star good? Did you like the ending? Did you eat popcorn?)
2. Ask the class what they observed you doing.
3. Have the volunteer tell you about the same movie or TV show again. This time, demonstrate GOOD listening by:
 - making eye contact
 - nodding, looking interested
 - restating (paraphrasing the student’s comments)
 - asking open-ended questions (Questions that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no” answers).

4. Ask the class what you did this time. Write answers on the board.
5. Ask “*Why are open-ended questions important?*” If the class doesn’t know, explain that you get more information.
6. Discuss the value of restating for the speaker and for the listener.
7. Do you think that people from different races or different countries or even different parts of the United States have different listening styles? Consider the following differences:
 - a. Eye contact
 - b. Body language (i.e. how close people stand to one another)
 - c. Manner of speech

What does this mean for you as a Conflict Mediator?

Questions for Discussion

(These questions are suggestions.

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

1. How can you show you are listening?
2. When is it difficult to listen?
3. How do you feel when a person does/does not listen?
4. Why would listening be important for a Conflict Mediator?

Distribute handout “Communication: Active Listening.” Alternatively, you can give each student a handout booklet at the end of the training.

The Discovery

Objective	Materials	Approximate Time
To understand that cultural differences may cause conflict and that it is important to respect one another.	One copy of the <i>The Discovery</i> . <i>NAMES video (optional)</i>	30 minutes

Training Guide

The Discovery Story sets the stage for an in depth discussion of cultural differences and how we deal with them. It is important to give the class time to think about this story and how differences and prejudices have impacted their lives.

You may also choose to show NAMES, a video produced by CRU, showing high school students mediating disputes involving cultural differences.

Teaching Points

- People from different cultures or backgrounds see things differently. These differences may cause confusion and conflict.
- Many people experience prejudice. It is important for Conflict Mediators to recognize their own biases and, as Conflict Mediators, to help disputants understand how they are affecting other people.

THE DISCOVERY

1. Write the word, 'Culture' on the board and ask the class, "What is culture? What makes up people's culture?" Write the answers on the board.
2. Tell the class you are going to read two versions of the same incident.

Part I

The People watched as the three huge sail canoes approached. No one had ever seen canoes this big. Surely this must be the Ancestors returning to the People from over the Great Sea. The People watched as smaller canoes set out from the larger ones. They began the preparations for the great feast to welcome the visitors.

When the visitors beached their canoes and stepped onto the sand, the People got a shock. The skin of the visitors was light-colored, almost as pale as a corpse. The People had naturally assumed that everyone in the World had dark-colored skin like they had. The People also noticed the visitors all wore heavy strange-looking robes covering their bodies almost completely. Why would anyone carry such a burden in the heat? Some of the visitors carried strange sticks that shone brightly in the sun. It was hard to guess what they might be for, but since there were no spearheads on the ends, they weren't likely to be weapons. The People waited cautiously to see what these strange-looking visitors would do.

One of the visitors stuck a pole with a strangely colored piece of cloth on the end into the sand and shouted something in a language the People had never heard. The Chief of the People stepped forward to welcome the visitors, offering his spear as a gift, as was the custom among the People. One of the visitors pointed his stick at the Chief. Suddenly there was a loud noise like a clap of thunder and the Chief fell to the ground.

Part II

After many months at sea the crew sighted land at last. The fabulous treasures of the Indies were finally to be theirs. The Captain would claim the new lands for the King. Excitedly they boarded the landing boats and set out for shore. As they approached the shore they saw a small group of dark-skinned people watching them from the beach. Some of the crew had heard tales of people with dark skins, some had seen Moors, dark people of the African continent, but none had actually seen people like these. The crew noticed they wore very little clothing. These people of the Indies, these "Indians," must be

savages, for only the uncivilized would go around almost naked like that. The crew noticed they carried only spears and clubs and would be no match for the guns if there was trouble. Still they stepped onto the beach cautiously, waiting to see what these strange-looking people would do.

The crew saw the Captain plant the flag in the sand and proclaim “I claim these lands for the King.” One of the “Indians” came toward the Captain with a spear. A crewman quickly aimed his gun and shot the savage.

3. Discussion of the story and issues of cultural diversity

- Ask the class, “What did you hear in these stories that told you about these people’s cultures?” Notice how the answers fit with the list on culture.
- Ask the class, “What was happening in this story? Why did this conflict take place? Why didn’t the two sides understand each other?”
- TAKE YOUR TIME WITH THIS SECTION: Ask the class, “Do people in your school have conflicts because they are different from one another?” Say, “Give me an example of one problem that has occurred. Please do not use names of the people in the situation.” SPEND TIME ON ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES. Ask, “How did this person feel?” “Why do you think this happened?” If you are not getting any response, tell the students about cultural or racial incidents that you know about in other schools. Mention topics like rich and poor, boys and girls, tall and short, different religions, different traditions.
- Ask the students, “What does this mean for you as Conflict Mediators? What is your job or goal as a Conflict Mediator if you have two people in a dispute over a racial or cultural issue?”

4. Help the students realize that their goal as Conflict Mediators is to help the disputants understand each other better--not to solve the racial problems of the world. However, if disputants begin to understand each other better and to realize how their words and actions affect the other person, they may be more likely to change the words or behavior.

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 Mediators moving closer to Joey, the weaker disputant. The Conflict Mediators needed to “Enforce the Rules” several times to help Balance the Power.

Teaching Points

- In order for the Conflict Mediation process to work, the disputants have to be relatively equal in power. It is the job of the Conflict Mediators 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 Mediators 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 Mediator
#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 Mediator 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 Mediator to balance the power?
2. Are there other ways to help balance the power?
3. Why is it important to the Conflict Mediation process to balance the power?