



## LESSON PLAN

<b>Level:</b>	Grades 1 to 4
<b>About the Author:</b>	Adapted by MediaSmarts, with permission from the Ottawa Board of Education A Problem-Solving Approach To Conflict Management: Part 2, Teacher's Manual, and Gloria De Gaetano Screen Smarts: A Family Guide To Media Literacy, 1996

# Facing TV Violence: Rewriting the Script

## Overview

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This lesson teaches children that television doesn't always offer the best solutions to conflict. It begins with students discussing a scenario in which two friends experience conflict, with students brainstorming constructive ways in which the conflict could be resolved. On the second day, students look at samples of conflict depicted on television and discuss whether the way these situations are dealt with represents the best way to handle the situation.

## Learning Outcomes

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Students demonstrate:

- an awareness of the different types of violence that appear in children's television programs.
- an understanding that the methods used to resolve conflict on television may not be the best or only way to resolve the conflict.
- an understanding of alternate methods of conflict resolution.

This lesson offers an opportunity to reinforce conflict resolution techniques that have been implemented in your school. The conflict resolution strategies featured here are from the Ottawa Board of Education's *Problem-Solving Approach To Conflict Management*, but your own School Board's programs can easily be substituted.

## Preparation and Materials

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- Photocopy *Constructive Ways To Handle Conflict*.
- Tape a few television programs in which conflict occurs. (Cartoons are good for younger children.)
- Supplies for painting or drawing posters or comic strips.
- An extra tip: Try to locate the NFB film *Live TV* in your school board collection or public library. This drama for 6 - 9 year olds explores the ways in which kids are really smarter about conflict resolution than their TV. Makes an excellent introduction or wrap up to this topic.



## Procedure

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### Day 1

Begin by creating a scenario like the following: "Let's pretend that two friends, Ali and Kelsey, are playing Nintendo and both kids want to play at the same time."

- What is the problem?
- What might happen? (They might fight over the controller; they could 'get mad' and yell, or cry, or push; they might go and get an adult to intervene; they might decide to take turns)
- How could the problem be resolved? (Taking turns; getting an adult to decide; playing something else)
- Which is the best solution? Which is the worst solution? Why? (Taking turns is the best way to solve this problem, because both kids get to take a turn, and because they worked it out themselves, neither kid feels 'forced' to make a choice. The idea of 'taking turns' is called *compromise*)

Distribute copies of *Constructive Ways To Handle Conflict* to your students.

### Guided Discussion

There are many different ways to handle our problems. Some, like compromise, are called constructive ways to handle problems, because when you use these methods, each person benefits. When we get angry, or violent, we are not handling our problems, we are reacting to our problems, and someone always ends up feeling bad when we act this way.

Review *Constructive Ways To Handle Conflict*:

- **Walk Away:** Sometimes the best way to avoid conflict is just to walk away and not get drawn into an argument.
- **Distract:** Is used when someone needs to get their mind on to something else because they're upset or worried, and therefore cannot make good choices. For example, if a friend is upset about a problem at home, you might be able to stop them from exploding by getting them interested in another game or outing.
- **Use Chance:** Sometimes flipping a coin, or picking a number, is a good way to make sure that everyone gets a fair chance.
- **Share:** That way everyone is happy!
- **Get Help:** Some problems are difficult to handle on your own. If you can't solve your problem, ask a person whom you trust and who may be counted on for a fair decision.
- **Postpone:** If a friend or parent is in a "bad" mood, it might be a good idea for you to wait until tomorrow to talk to them about your problem, because they will not be able to think clearly right now.
- **Apologize:** This is helpful to show the person you're sorry about the situation—not necessarily that you're wrong. Giving an explanation can really help and set a peaceful tone.
- **Take Turns:** Like sharing, this solution lets both parties win.
- **Talk It Out:** Instead of reacting, talk about the problem and see if you both can solve it.

Brainstorm different problems and how they can be resolved using these conflict resolution strategies.



**Activity**

**Primary students:** Have students draw or paint a picture of a problem being solved through one of these strategies.

**Junior students:** Divide students into nine groups. Assign a conflict resolution strategy to each group. Students will create a brief comic strip outlining a problem and how it is resolved through their strategy.

Pictures and cartoons will be displayed in the classroom.

**Evaluation**

- Drawings and painting (individual assessment)
- Comic strips (groups assessment)

**The Lesson: Day 2**

Once students understand that there are alternatives to violence in handling conflict, they are ready to look at how conflict is represented on television.

**Guided discussion**

- Think of your favourite TV show. Can you think of a problem (conflict) that you have seen on that show? (You may have to give examples of problems to students and explain the difference between plot - what happened - and problems - the conflicts that arise.)
- How was the problem handled?
- Did the characters on the show use violent (give examples of verbal or physical violence) or non-violent ways of solving the problem?
- How did the characters feel about the way the problem was solved?
- If they used violence, how could the problem have been handled differently?

We see a lot of conflict on television, and a lot of violence. Many times, the way people act on television is not the way we would want to solve our own problems. Today we are going to look at some television shows that contain problems and see how they are handled on TV.

**After each excerpt ask:**

- What is the problem?
- How many people are involved?
- What has actually been said or done?
- How do the characters solve each problem?
- How could it be resolved? Which of our conflict management strategies could be used?

(Younger students will answer these verbally, older students might write down their answers.)



## Activity

Options:

1. Students can act out what they have just seen, substituting a conflict resolution strategy suggested by the teacher or chosen by themselves, as an alternative to violence.
2. Primary students can draw pictures of the television characters solving their problem in a constructive way.
3. Older students can become "screenwriters" and rewrite the plot in order to eliminate the violence and come up with alternate solutions to the problems.

## Evaluation

- Performances
- Pictures
- Scripts



## Constructive Ways to Handle Conflict

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# CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS TO HANDLE CONFLICT



Source: *A Problem-Solving Approach to Conflict Management, Part 2 - A Teacher's Manual* by the Ottawa Board of Education

