

# Lesson 2.1

## Maintaining Trusting Relationships



### Rationale

This lesson allows students to explore the concept of competition versus collaboration and to understand that conflicts are easier to manage when the people in conflict work together, trust one another, and strive to maintain their relationship. This is true in interpersonal conflicts, but also in intergroup and international conflicts.

### Objectives

1. To understand the role of relationships in conflict management.
2. To understand the role of trust in building these relationships.

### Standards

- ◆ Culture
- ◆ Civic Ideals and Practices

**Time:** 50 minutes

### Materials

- *Conflict Line Roles* Handout (cut into role strips)



50 minutes

### Quick Activity: Lap Sit

If you have extra time or if you are short on time and cannot do the whole trust-building lesson, you can do this quick trust-building exercise with your students.

1. Have everyone stand in a circle facing their left, so everyone is looking at the back of the person in front of them.
2. Make sure they are very close to each other. If they need to get closer, they can take a step into the circle. This will tighten the circle.
3. Tell students that when you say “sit,” they should slowly sit on the lap of the person behind them. The exercise only works if everyone sits at the same time.
4. Have everyone stand and then lead a discussion using the following questions.
  - ◆ How did it feel to do this exercise?
  - ◆ Was anyone nervous? Why? How did you overcome your nervousness?
  - ◆ What was the role of trust in this exercise?
  - ◆ What is the role of trust when trying to manage a conflict?

## Procedures

1. Divide students into pairs and have them share a conflict they were recently involved in. While describing the conflict, have them share:
  - ◆ With whom were you in conflict? A friend, family member, stranger?
  - ◆ How did the type of relationship affect how you managed the conflict? Did it make it easier? Harder?
2. Have a few volunteers share their conflict and their responses to the questions.
3. Ask the class:
  - ◆ How do relationships impact conflict management?
  - ◆ Why do relationships often fall apart? What makes it difficult to maintain relationships in conflict situations?
  - ◆ How might trying to maintain the relationship with the person with whom you are in conflict (or build a relationship, if you do not know the other party well) affect how you approach the conflict?
4. Point out to students the importance of trust even in difficult situations, as well as the importance of maintaining relationships.
5. Tell the class that they are going to participate in an exercise in which they have to manage a conflict.
6. Divide the class into groups of three and have the groups stand in different places in the room.
7. Ask one person in each group to be an observer.
8. Have the other two in each group face each other with a line or a piece of tape on the floor dividing them.
9. Provide each student in the pairs with the statements on the *Cross the Line* Handout.
10. Gather those assigned Student 1 and make sure they understand what they are supposed to do. Tell them they can use any strategy except physical violence to accomplish their task.
11. Do the same with those assigned Student 2.
12. Tell them that they will begin on “Action” and have exactly 3 minutes to solve the problem.
13. After 3 minutes, say “Stop” and have all students return to their seats.
14. Lead a class discussion using some or all of the following questions:
  - ◆ How many people were saved at the end of 3 minutes?
  - ◆ What strategies did you use to try to solve the problem?
  - ◆ How many of you shared your problem with the other person?
  - ◆ Have one person in the Student 1 role and one person in the Student 2 role read their scenario. What do you notice about the scenarios? (they’re exactly the same)
  - ◆ How important was it to trust the person on the other side of the line in this exercise?
  - ◆ How might the exercise have gone differently if everyone had trusted the other person in the scenario and had shared exactly what their situation was?

- ◆ What does the exercise teach about cooperation versus competition and the value of working together for a solution that benefits everyone (a win-win solution)? What relevance might this have to peacebuilding at the international level?

*The solution is for both people in the pair to cross the line to the other side and to stay on the other side.*

**Assessment:**

Small group work and whole class discussion

**Extension Activity**

**Journal Entry:** Write about a time when your relationship with someone changed as a result of a conflict you had with them. Looking back, what could you have done differently to preserve the relationship?

## Lesson 2.1 HANDOUT: CONFLICT LINE ROLES

(CUT INTO STRIPS)

Information for Student 1: You will be sentenced to life in prison in exactly 3 minutes. Your only chance to escape is if you can get your opponent to cross over to your side and stay there before the time is up. Good luck.

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Information for Student 2: You will be sentenced to life in prison in exactly 3 minutes. Your only chance to escape is if you can get your opponent to cross over to your side and stay there before the time is up. Good luck.