Big Ideas For This Lesson

Conflict is a fact of life. Try as we might to avoid it, disagreements and problems will inevitably arise. This is especially true in lower elementary classrooms where many students have not yet developed the self-awareness and relationship skills necessary to successfully navigate conflict. A critical component of teaching conflict resolution, then, is the normalization of conflict – learning to approach conflict as a healthy opportunity for growth and actively developing the necessary skillset rather than punishing students for engaging in conflict or seeking to avoid or escape conflict.

At base, conflict is simply an outward expression of unmet needs. The key to constructively resolving conflict, then, involves the ability to identify and express these needs. In this lesson, students will learn a 2-step check-in to promote self-awareness and peaceful conflict resolution through expressing needs. The check-in promotes emotional literacy and empathy by asking students to first share an I-Statement about how they feel, and then prompts them to work towards a solution by asking for what they need or want.

Given enough practice, this will become an effective way for students and teachers to quickly resolve conflicts. However, some conflicts may require more than a simple check-in. The 3-5 and 6-8 companion lessons offer an introduction to Restorative Approaches for solving more complex problems and developing a school-wide vision for responding to conflict.

Essential Vocabulary

Active or Whole Body Listening
Check-Ins
Conflict
Peace Pledge
Peacefully
Promise
Solving Problems

Materials

- Solving Problems Peacefully Themed Read-Aloud (Optional): The Peace Rose by Alicia Olson
- Video: Video Reading of The Peace Rose (3:28)
- Solving Problems Peacefully Anchor Charts: 1) Peace Pledge and 2) Check-In Steps. Directions included at the end of this lesson.

Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict - alternatives to passive or aggressive responses, alternatives to violence. —Dorothy Thompson
Preparation
Create two Solving Problems Peacefully Anchor Charts: 1) Peace Pledge and 2) Check-In Steps.

Teaching Script
BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE & CONCEPT MODELING (I DO)

Begin by discussing conflict and solving problems with the students in a group.

Do we always get along? No. That’s ok. When we don’t get along with our friends, it’s called having a conflict. Conflict is a normal part of life! But it can be uncomfortable to have a conflict, so there are skills we can learn to make it a little easier and to solve our problems peacefully. Thumbs up if you have ever seen students try to solve a problem, but it wasn’t very peaceful. For example, just this morning I saw...

Teaching Note: Use your own, truthful examples of how students have not solved problems peacefully. This will really connect this lesson to your own classroom community. Ultimately, students should understand that conflict is not always a bad thing and that it is actually a normal, expected part of life. Conflict can even be helpful because it motivates us to change, grow, learn, and leads us to solutions we would not otherwise consider.

Today we are going to learn how to have check-ins with each other when we are having a conflict with someone. A check-in is an easy way to solve most of our conflicts peacefully.

Remind students about the second SEL lesson when they learned about I-Statements. Refer to the poster or anchor chart you may have up in your classroom.

Has anyone used an I-Statement recently? Well, we are going to use I-Statements to help us solve problems peacefully, but we’re going to add on to it a little. Whenever you need to solve a problem with someone, we are going to call it having a ‘Check-In.’ That just means that you and the other student are going to check-in with each other to solve your problem or conflict. There are only 2 steps to a check-in! Pretty simple!

Show students the anchor chart with the ‘Check-In Steps’ on it. Explain the two steps.

In order to help us understand peaceful problem-solving even more, we are going to read this book, The Peace Rose by Alicia Olson, which gives lots of examples of students using the check-in steps.

Read the story or show the video reading of the story to the students, pausing to check for understanding and ask questions.
Teaching Note: Depending on the structure of your day and schedule, this read aloud could be done at the beginning of this lesson instead.

Explain to students that before we can learn to solve problems peacefully, we have to take the Peace Pledge and make some promises to each other. Ask them if they are ready and have them hold up their right hand.

Teaching Note: Students will think this is kind of silly but also realize the gravity of conflict resolution and peaceful problem solving if you have them take this pledge. Make sure to have the pledge up on an anchor chart so that you can reference it.

Repeat after me. I promise...to be respectful...to take turns speaking...to tell the truth...and to help find a solution. Great! Now that everyone has taken the Peace Pledge, we can practice solving problems peacefully.

GUIDED PRACTICE (WE DO)

Have students count off by 1's and 2's.

Now it's time for us to practice having a check-in! We are going to peacefully solve some pretend problems.

a. Ask for two volunteers who are "good actors" to come to the front of the class and help you show how to do a check-in.

b. Explain to the class that Student #1 pushed Student #2 out of the way to get the first spot in line (or choose another conflict that is common in your classroom).

c. Prompt students to say the following script:

"Student #2: I need to have a check-in."

"Student #1: Okay."

"Student #2: I felt hurt when you pushed me out of line. Please don't do that again and I'd like to have my spot back."

"Student #1: Okay. Friends?"

"Student #2: Friends!"

Teaching Note: Depending on the students or the climate of your classroom, you could have the two students give each other a high five or hug at the end of the check-in. If time permits, call on different students to come up and solve a different problem with a check-in, perhaps allowing more independence in the script.
REINFORCING LESSON CONCEPTS (YOU DO)

Before we start our Solving Problems Peacefully: SEL Journaling Page for this lesson, let’s think about a check-in. Why is it important for us to solve our problems peacefully? What would the world be like if we didn’t solve problems peacefully?

Teaching Note: Students should understand that others will not want to solve conflicts with them if they cannot do it peacefully. Also, when we each make a commitment to be peaceful, then the whole world will be more peaceful. Really listen to student responses to these discussion questions, as they will come up with their own profound answers.

Solving problems peacefully is something that we will get to practice almost every day, because conflict is a normal part of life. Having a check-in is something that you can do on your own or with the help of a teacher. One important thing to remember is to make sure that you are calm before you ask for a check-in. Will you be able to solve a problem peacefully if you are still super angry or upset? No! Next week, we are going to learn ways to breathe that can help us calm down.

Have students complete the Solving Problems Peacefully: SEL Journal Page for this lesson.

EVIDENCE OF CONCEPT ATTAINMENT

Reflect on it

- How is a ‘Check-In’ different than how you normally solve conflicts?
- Will a Check-In work if someone does not keep their promise to work things out?
- Is there a conflict that you had yesterday or today that you think a Check-In could help you with?
- How can you a Check-In outside of school?

Journal it

Have students complete the Solving Problems Peacefully: SEL Journal Page for this lesson.
### EXTENSIONS

**Classroom**
- Post the Peace Pledge and the Check-In Anchor Charts in the classroom.
- Facilitate check-ins when appropriate.

**School-wide**
- Consider how conflict resolution can be used in school discipline proceedings to reduce punitive consequences. Are students given the skills and opportunity to solve their conflicts peacefully with a peer before being punished?
- Ensure that all staff are trained in peaceful conflict resolution methods. Most conflicts will occur on the playground, lunchroom, or school bus, so these staff are critical 'first responders' for modeling healthy conflict resolution.
- Restorative Approaches, when used effectively, provide an excellent alternative to punitive consequences. RA has been a critical component in reducing out-of-school suspensions and racial disparities in many school districts. Encourage your administration to evaluate their use of RA and consider attending RA trainings if they are available in your district.

### REFERENCES


Conflict is a normal part of life!

**Peace Pledge**
I promise to...

- Be respectful.
- Take turns speaking.
- Tell the truth.
- Help find a solution.

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**The Check-In**
   
   I feel...when...

2. Say what you would like.
   
   I would like...
   or
   Please...