TURN CONFLICT INTO COOPERATION

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Rationale:
Conflict is ubiquitous and the classroom exemplifies it. Students regularly complain about a teacher’s unfair grading of a paper or an exam. Some grumble that the course syllabus requirements are over-demanding, unnecessary or silly. Those working in groups protest that the behavior of a group member is inappropriate, inconsiderate or not up to group standards. The purpose of this activity is to help students recognize the one element that often makes conflict resolution difficult and, then, offers a way to manage that element. Practicing this approach helps students and teachers find a more collaborative pathway to problem solving. Once learned and applied in the classroom, this method can be used successfully in all of their day-to-day experiences.

Materials: Conflict Types Activity

Conflict types:
1. Content - disagreement over "facts"
2. Decisional - decision about different courses of action to take
3. Material - competition for material goods such as money, job, etc.
4. Role - disagreement over role expectation and/or behavior
5. Judgmental - disagreement over the value or worth of something
6. Expectancy - difference between our expectations of something and the perceived reality
7. Ego - disagreement over the worth of yourself or someone else

Match the Types with each of the following situations:

A. ______ A boyfriend and girlfriend disagree over which movie to see.
B. ______ A brother and sister are arguing over who gets use of the family car on Friday night.
C. ______ Your boss and you disagree about how you should act around the other employees in your area of responsibility.
D. ______ You have had plans for a vacation in Hawaii for several months. You have arrived and now feel upset at how it is turning out.
E. ______ A teen-ager and his/her parents have an argument over what time is proper to return home from a date.
F. ______ You are having a disagreement with a friend over who won the Oscar for Best Picture in 1988.
G. ______ You are having an argument with a co-worker about the new sick leave policy, which has been enacted.
H. ______ You have decided to show another player on the team that you are better than him/her.
I. ______ You are having a disagreement with you instructor about your study habits.
J. ______ You and another employee are competing for the same promotion.
Description:
- Ask the class members to read the definitions of types of conflicts and then, on their own, match the appropriate definitions (#1-7) to each of the following situations (A-J).
- After the class members have completed the first task, give them the answers and discuss any disagreement.

A. __2__ A boyfriend and girlfriend disagree over which movie to see.

B. __3__ A brother and sister are arguing over who gets use of the family car on Friday night.

C. __4__ Your boss and you disagree about how you should act around the other employees in your area of responsibility.

D. __6__ You have had plans for a vacation in Hawaii for several months. You have arrived and now feel upset at how it is turning out.

E. __4__ A teen-ager and his/her parents have an argument over what time is proper to return home from a date.

F. __1__ You are having a disagreement with a friend over who won the Oscar for Best Picture in 1988.

G. __1/5__ You are having an argument with a co-worker about the new sick leave policy, which has been enacted.

H. __7__ You have decided to show another player on the team that you are better than him/her.

I. __4__ You are having a disagreement with your instructor about your study habits.

J. __3__ You and another employee are competing for the same promotion.

- Ask students to get into groups of four and discuss which type of conflict is the most difficult to resolve.
- Bring groups back to a large circle and focus on what each group concluded.

Processing:
- This is an opportunity to determine the ways in which most types of conflicts can be resolved objectively through a process. The most satisfying of these processes is referred to as Win-Win resolution.
- The only type of conflict not possible to resolve by using a Win-Win approach is ego conflict.
- Each type of conflict can become an ego issue and then it may be more difficult to resolve than pure ego conflict.
- This is a good time to discuss examples of when students have allowed their egos to get in the way of confronting the other types of conflict objectively.
- Finally, discuss how the students can use their understanding of ego involvement to resolve conflicts in the future.