

MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT

Directions: Read the following terms. Apply them as you observe conflict.

Conflict is resolved either violently or nonviolently. Most conflicts are resolved nonviolently. Certain techniques, processes, or strategies of conflict resolution need to be utilized in order to avoid extremes, such as complete conquest or complete avoidance. Sociologists refer to one solution of conflict as *accommodation*. In order to prevent a win-lose situation (conquest), or avoidance, the following strategies need to be learned and applied.

1. **Negotiation:** A process of talking over the positions or feelings by the conflicting parties, and discussing what can be done. This action could lead to *compromise*, *cooperation*, and other conflict-management techniques. *Example:* A student who works after school falls behind in his or her work, and negotiates (discusses) this situation with the teacher. They agree that the student will make up the work over a certain period of time.

2. **Cooperation:** The act of working together in a united effort to accomplish tasks that can be done better by a group than by an individual. Both sides change their attitudes because they believe it is better not to continue the conflict, in order to work for a greater goal. *Example:* Two students who are very hostile toward each other decide to bury their differences when both their talents are needed to produce a class play for the entire school.

3. **Compromise:** Both parties in a conflict give up something to resolve the problem. *Example:* You and your date cannot agree on where to go for the evening. After some bargaining, you reach a settlement whereby your wishes are satisfied on this date, and your friend's wishes will be satisfied at another time.

4. **Conciliation:** The act of gaining favor or goodwill, by reaching out with friendly words and acts in order to smooth feelings and pacify jealousy, suspicion, and hostility. If initiation by one party to resolve the conflict in this manner is not successful, there may be a need for an outside neutral party to smooth the feelings of the conflicting parties. *Example:* One of the parties in the conflict, on his or her own initiative, determines that the conflict can be resolved by smoothing the feelings of the other party with friendly words and acts. One or both sides change goals, rather than continuing or escalating the conflict. When an outside third party is brought in to mediate the conflict, we refer to the action as a *third-party judgment*. *Example:* Two students are arguing over who can borrow a book overnight from the class library shelf. Two approaches can be taken, as follows: (a) one party, in an act of goodwill, pacifies the other party by letting him or her have the book, or (b) neither party wishes to give in; therefore, the teacher steps in as the third party, and helps the conflicting parties to reach a

mutually satisfactory settlement of their differences by offering a substitute, but equally satisfactory, book to one of the parties.

5. **Arbitration and Mediation:** A mediator or arbitrator is a person who acts as a go-between in order to bring about an agreement between persons or sides in a dispute. In the case of mediation, the mediator recommends a solution that is not necessarily binding upon both parties in a conflict. Arbitration involves much the same process. However, in a situation where arbitration is utilized, both sides in a conflict must agree, in advance, to accept the arbitrator's decision as legally binding. *Example:* A dispute between labor and management is deadlocked over pay scales. Both sides agree to arbitration, and the arbitrator sets a fair-pay scale, which both sides must accept.

6. **Avoidance or Postponement:** The method of waiting for a more suitable time and/or place to handle the conflict, when possibly the involved parties will be more conciliatory or receptive to nonviolent communication, and the conflict can be resolved. *Example:* Two siblings are arguing; tempers are high, and violence is near. Mother separates them, sends them to different rooms, saying, "We'll try to settle the conflict later, when you are both less agitated."

7. **Truce or Standoff:** A settlement in which parties in a conflict realize that the struggle would be too costly and both back off. *Example:* Two "bullies" realize that a physical confrontation will result in quite a bit of bloodshed, and decide not to fight.

8. **Gentle Confrontation:** A case in which someone creating a conflict is invited to talk about the realities of the problem. This is a face-to-face technique, like conciliation. *Example:* A student in class has an annoying habit of putting people down. He has a wise remark for every situation. He is gently confronted by two friends who invite him to talk about his behavior, which has caused anger and hurt feelings. He may be unaware of the conflict situation he is creating.

9. **Education for a Causal Approach:** Individuals or a group deliberately study human needs and problem solving, creating in themselves the skills needed to resolve conflicts fairly and with sensitivity. *Example:* A group of scouts want to involve youth of another culture in their activities. In addition to anticipating different tastes in food, music, and the like, they also invite resource people in to discuss cultural differences regarding insulting remarks, rudeness, bad taste, politeness, and so on, so that conflicts may be minimized or prevented, or may be settled more readily when they arise.