

*Rude? Mean? Bullying?
Or Conflict?
How to Differentiate and
Empower Your Child...
And Yourself!*

Curriculum assembled and owned by

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Why Is This Knowledge Important To Adults?

Because a child having a good relationship with family and friends is critical for developing healthy relationships and in choosing positive lifetime intimate partners for the future.

Peer Acceptance And Status

- Starting late elementary school to middle school and on into high school: children are more reliant on peers for acceptance and popularity
- Natural conflict occurs as children learn how to manage and resolve this conflict
- This transition might result in bullying behavior as students attempt to define their place socially
- Appearance is most important for girls socially, while toughness is most important for boys (Eder, 1995)

CONFLICT

- Conflict inevitable in any relationship
- Management of conflict key
- Potential for growth or relationship crisis
- If not resolved...continues to grow

Is it *Rude*?

RUDE = Inadvertently saying or doing something that hurts someone else

Rude behaviors are usually spontaneous, unplanned, inconsiderate, based on thoughtlessness, poor manners, or narcissism – but not *intended* to hurt someone.

Examples:

- Have you ever thought about straightening your crazy, curly hair?
- Does that shirt really fit you?
- Have you ever even played football before?

Is it *Mean*?

MEAN = Purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone once (or maybe twice)

Mean behaviors are *intentional* and often involve criticizing clothing, appearance, intelligence, coolness, etc. Words may be spoken in anger, impulsively, and with cruelty that is often regretted.

Examples:

- Are you seriously wearing that sweater again? Don't you have anything else to wear?
- You are so fat / ugly / stupid...
- Nobody likes you anyway.

Is it *Bullying*??

BULLYING = Intentionally aggressive behavior, often repeated over time, that involves an imbalance of power

Experts agree that bullying entails 3 key elements:

1. An intent to harm
2. A power imbalance
3. Repeated acts or threats of aggressive behavior

Kids who bully say or do something intentionally hurtful and the ***keep doing it***, with no sense of regret or remorse – ***even when the target expresses hurt or tells them to stop.***

Let's Practice:

Is it rude, is it mean, is it bullying – or
could it be conflict???

- Kendra tells Jen she can't sit next to her at the lunch table because she's saving the seat for Mary.
- Tammy makes plans for a play date with her new friend, Gwen. Kayla tells Tammy that if she hangs out with Gwen everyone will think she's a weirdo & no one will like her anymore. Later at lunch, Kayla convinces everyone that it would be funny to laugh & whisper when Tammy approaches the table.
- Lucas tells David he can't play with the blocks because he's the worst builder in the whole grade.

More Practice...

- Maggie is making fun of Jessie repeatedly asking, “Why do you only hang out with boys?” and “Why do you always wear basketball shorts?” In P.E. last week, Maggie told Jessie to go play on the boys’ team. Yesterday in class, Maggie wrote “Jessie is a boy” on the white board. Jessie has asked Maggie to stop several times.
- Devin & Sam are friends. They had an argument at recess. Devin called Sam a name, so Sam shoved him.

Conflict: Constructive & Destructive Approaches

- **Constructive**

- Focus on present rather than past issues
- Share both positive and negative feelings
- Accept mutual blame
- Search for similarities
- High concern for self and others
- Optimal solution strived; don't want compromise for self or others

- **Destructive**

- Avoidance, keeping feelings to self
 - Maintains peace, even though a hollow peace
 - Neglect of self interest for others
 - May convey message that conflict is bad, or they have a lack of concern or care
- Conflict = war, object is to win the war
 - Emphasize differences, focus on people versus issues
 - High concern for self, low concern for others
- Brings up old issues

Conflict Vs. Bullying

- **Conflict**

- Differences of opinions or methods
- Arguing/disagreements
- A two-person problem between equals (friends, classmates, teammates) that can be solved by effective communication
- Both sides usually want the issue resolved, to make things better, to improve the relationship

- **Bullying**

- One individual has power and control over another (physically stronger, more popular, etc.)
- Not a two-party problem; one-sided behaviors
- Intentionally aggressive/hurtful behavior, repeated over time, that continues even when the target expresses hurt or tells the aggressor to stop

Sometimes It's More Than Conflict Management...

- What is the difference between a qualities of a person you “respect” versus a person you “fear”?



- A person who is respected and a person who is feared often get the same things... attention, their way, etc.
 - However, one person is instilling something very negative in those with whom they interact (fear)
 - The other person is instilling something very positive in others (respect)
- When do we think we're gaining respect but really instilling fear?
- How can we gain respect without instilling fear?
- How can we encourage our children to choose friends whom they respect and respect them in return?

Forms of Bullying

Bullying behavior can take on many forms:

1. Verbal aggression (calling names, threats, etc.)
2. Relational aggression (purposeful excluding, rumor spreading, etc.)
3. Physical aggression (hitting, punching, tripping, etc.)
4. Racial bullying
5. Sexual bullying
6. Cyber bullying (willful, repeated harm inflicted through use of computers, cell phones, & other electronic devices

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/signe-whitson/bullying_b_2188819.html

Boys are more likely to be bullied physically; girls are likely to be the target of rumors, sexual comments, and social exclusion. (Nansel, et al., 2001)

How Do I Know If A Relationship Is NOT Healthy?

Does your child:

- Sometimes feel scared of how a peer will react?
- Constantly make excuses for a peer's behavior?
- Try not to do anything that would cause conflict or a peer to be unhappy?
- Always do what a peer wants to do, instead of what he/she wants to do?
- Get blamed for how a peer feels or acts?
- Embarrasses or makes fun of your child in front of their friends and family?
- Puts down your child's accomplishments or goals?
- Prevents your child from doing things you want, like spending time with other friends?

If you said “yes” to any of these, consider that your child is struggling with a bully or an unhealthy relationship. Even if it's not you, ask them to confide in a trustworthy advisor, mentor, friend, parent or relative.

Tips for a Child Who Has Been Hurt

- It's not your fault and you don't deserve it.
- You can stand up for yourself to say STOP or use an I-statement – if you feel safe doing so.
- Remove yourself from the situation if possible.
- Hang out with people who let you be you and are “healthy” friends.
- Use humor to deflect rude or mean comments.
- Don't respond by wearing the bully hat yourself.
- Get help from adults you trust. If they give you advice that's not working, let them know so they can help you come up with more effective solutions.

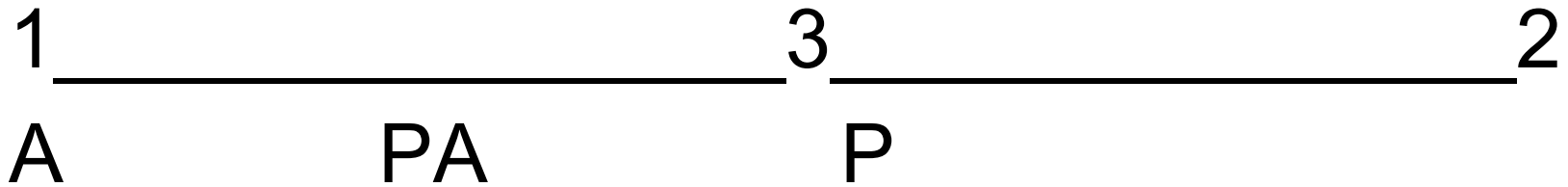
Tips for a Child Who Witnesses Conflict

- Practice empathy - imagine how the other child must be feeling and show you care by doing something to help.
- Don't encourage the behavior by laughing, joining in, or just listening.
- Tell the child who is being rude, mean, or bullying to STOP – if you feel safe doing so.
- Comfort the target – use encouraging words.
- Help remove the target from the situation – invite him/her to join your activity or group.
- If your problem solving does not work, get help from an adult you trust.

Helping Children Who Are Demonstrating Rude, Mean, or Bullying Behaviors

- Reaching out and talking to a child we think is being unhealthy in his/her relationships is truly an act of kindness, though it may seem like the hardest thing you can do.
- Be specific about what you saw and how it made you feel.
- Make sure they realize that actions have consequences, and they could get into serious trouble—even getting expelled from school or kicked off of a team.
- Urge them to get help, from a counselor, coach, or any trusted adult, and offer to go with them if they want support.
- Let him/her know you are there for them whenever they need to talk and that you are worried about them.

Communication Spectrum



1: Aggressive

2: Passive

3: Passive Aggressive

Communication Styles

- Aggressive
 - Natural response, gets us in trouble
 - Aims to hurt or put down the other person
 - Disrespectful to Others, Honest to Self
- Passive
 - Unnatural response, unsustainable
 - Unwillingness to say what one thinks, feels, or wants
 - Respectful to Others, Dishonest to Self
- Passive-Aggressive
 - Sustainable because it releases our natural aggression in a way that doesn't get us in as much trouble
 - Aims to release negative feelings without stating to target problem
 - Disrespectful to Others, Dishonest to Self
- Assertive
 - Learned response, have to work at it
 - Expression of one's thoughts, feelings, and desires as a right
 - Respectful to Others, Honest to Self

Processing How I Handle Conflict

- Think of a topic that you have been having difficulty with in a relationship.
 - How have you handled it?
 - Passively, aggressively, or assertively?
 - How could you handle it more assertively?

Positive Self Talk

- I don't need to prove myself in this situation. I can stay calm.
- I can keep my cool.
- I'm the only person who can make me mad or keep me calm.
- Time to relax and slow things down. I can pause if I get uptight or start to notice my cues.
- My anger is a signal. I need to pause and relax.
- Nothing says I have to be confident and strong all the time. It's okay if I feel unsure or confused.
- It is impossible to control other people and situations. The only thing I can control is myself and how I express my feelings.
- It is okay to be uncertain and insecure sometimes. I don't need to be in control of everything and everybody.
- If people criticize me, I can survive that. Nothing says that I have to be perfect.
- If this person is angry, I don't need to respond by also getting angry.
- When I get into an argument, I can use my action plan and know what to do. I can take a pause at any time.
- It's nice to have the other person's love and approval, but even without it, I can still accept and like myself.
- People are going to act the way they want to, not the way I want them to.

Processing My Positive Self-Talk

- Which positive self talk statement stands out the most to you?
- What negative self talk statements will it replace?
- How will this change affect you?
- How will this change how you deal with a negative situation?

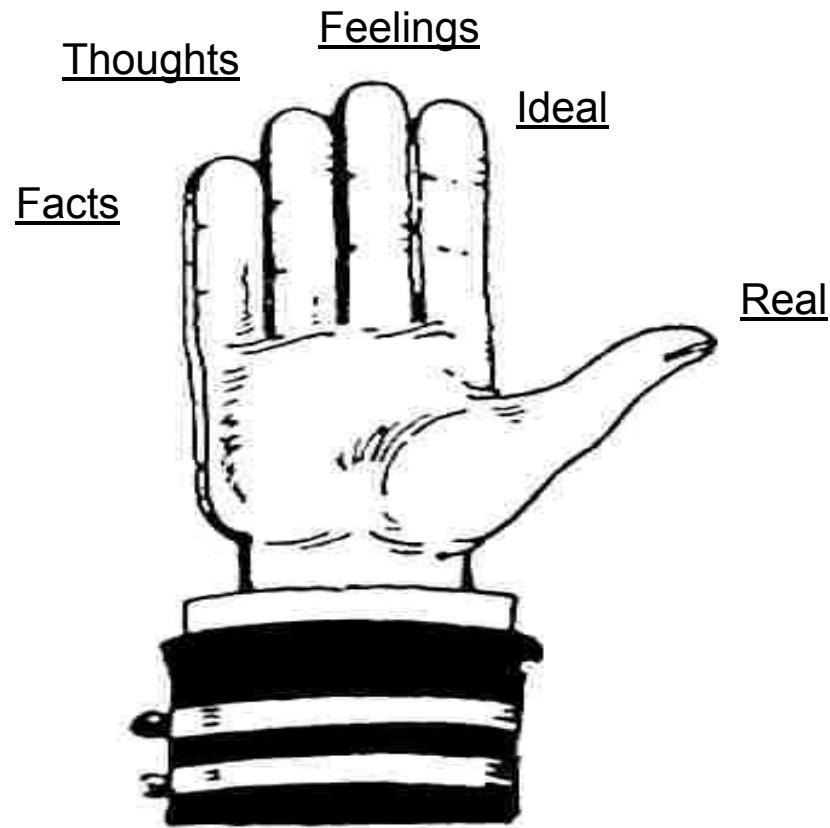
Improving Communication for Conflict Resolution

I-Statements

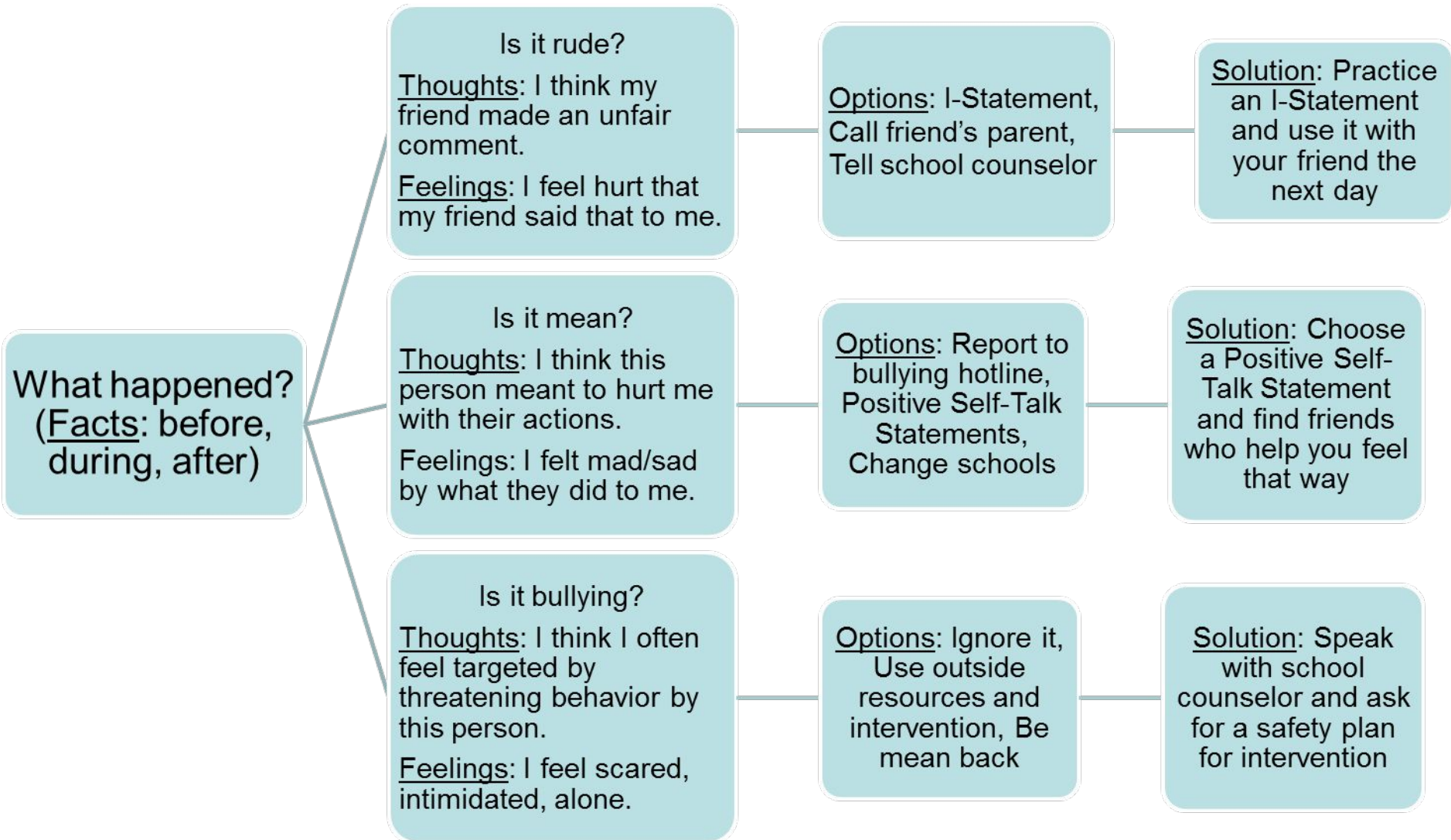
- Describe personal thoughts, feelings, or experiences in first-person
- Advantages:
 - not threatening
 - promote openness
 - focus on problems rather than personalities

“I feel _____ when I am _____ and I would instead like to feel _____ which can be accomplished by _____.”

Conflict Resolution Steps



Conflict Management Steps



Processing My Conflict Resolution Process

- Ask your child to think about an issue he/she has been having with another peer.
- Use I-statements, the hand chart, and self-talk statements to map out how they could handle the situation.
- Ask them to create a plan for when and how they can put it into place at school.
- Follow-up with your child to see how the plan worked for them, and modify it as needed.

Become a Safe Person, Create a Safe Place

- Find a “safe place” that offers the student a specific timeframe and rules to have a “no judgement/shame free” place to communicate with you
 - After-school “no judgement” walk around the block
 - Connect through activity or play
 - Honor the need for “timed” silence
 - Be quiet and *really* listen
 - Look for pain behind aggression
 - Explore: open-ended questions, “tell me more about that...”
 - Make non-judgemental, brief statements and wait for a response
 - Show empathy and compassion; offer comfort and support
 - Let him know that “real men” do cry and talk about feelings
 - Convey admiration for the child
 - Be patient... new habits, rules, relationships take time for trust to be gained!

Remember...

- Be involved in all aspects of your child's life... even if they don't like it!
- Recognize ALL signs of unhealthy relationships, and don't make assumptions based on your stereotypes (example: "It's only the internet"; "It's not a real relationship"; "He's a boy, so he's naturally more physical").
- Communicate between parents and students about what they do and do not deserve from ALL of their relationships.
- Become comfortable with being assertive and an advocate by practicing at home in a role play scenario so you already have lines rehearsed that you know you can say.
- Assure your child they have the right to stand up for themselves and the responsibility to stand up for others who need help. (*Tree swing example*)
- Model healthy relationships for your children and to your children!

“Fighting Fairly” in Our Own Homes

- If one loses, both lose
- Avoid ultimatums
- Say what you really mean
- Own your feelings
- Avoid accusations and attacks
- Call time out
- State wishes clearly
- Check your perceptions
- Repeat the message you think you received
- Refuse to fight dirty
- Resist silent treatment
- Focus on issue
- Use humor
- Seek closure

Set the Example!

My folks have been married for 47 years. One of my father's rules for a happy marriage is that if a nasty argument threatens to erupt, hold hands while you hash it out. You'll feel incredibly goofy doing this (and your hand may sweat a little), but here's the thing: It works. Recently my messy husband, Tom, forgot to pay a stash of bills that was buried under a pile of clutter. I was in a rage. But when I held his hand as we worked it out, my blood pressure immediately dropped. It's impossible to scream at someone who is sitting right next to you, meeting your gaze, and holding your hand. It just is.

HOLD TIGHT BY JANCEE DUNN
FROM Real Simple

Processing My Fair Fighting Techniques

- Which fair fighting techniques do we do well at demonstrating?
- Which fair fighting techniques do we not do well at demonstrating?
- Which fair fighting techniques do we want to prioritize as commitments in our household?
- How can we demonstrate this commitment to abide by our agreed upon fair fighting techniques?

In Healthy Families:

- the self worth of members is high
- communication is voiced honestly and directly
- rules are flexible and appropriate
- it is natural to be open to the outside world
- everyone has reachable goals and is supported

“Children... learn from the kind of environment adults create. Whether children learn to see themselves as strong or weak, smart or stupid, loved or simply tolerated, and... whether they see the world as trustworthy or dangerous, depends largely on their surroundings.”

Kerr and Bowen (1988)

Strong Families...

- Find the positive
- Pull together
- Communicate clearly
- Keep things in perspective
- Adopt new roles in flexible manner
- Look at big picture
- Find meaning and purpose
- Address challenges head on
- Ask for help from outside resources

Resource Utilization

- Finally, need to expand your support system of resources? Find people, support systems, and community organizations who can help you!
- The SMU Center for Family Counseling may be one of them and also can connect you to countless other resources to assist you. See below for more information; we look forward to serving you!

SMU Center for Family Counseling

SMU welcomes individuals of all ages to receive low- and no-cost clinical services in our state of the art counseling clinic. Our services are conducted by students in the Master of Counseling program and supervised by licensed faculty and staff of SMU. Clinical services offered to the community include individual therapy, couples therapy, family therapy, play therapy, group therapy, school counseling, career counseling, trainings, substance abuse screenings and evaluative reports, and supervised visitations.

Visit www.smu.edu/familycounseling for a full listing of our services and resources. To schedule an appointment, call **972-473-3456**.

SMU-Associated Clinic Locations in the Community:

- Center for Family Counseling (Plano)
- Resource Center of Dallas (Downtown Dallas)
- Student Opportunity Center of FISD (Frisco)

Processing My Take Away's

- What are the top three things I have gotten from today?
- What are the top three things I want to prioritize for my own relationships?
- What are three things I can commit to for my child?
- How will I measure my success in these goals?

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR TIME!**

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