



Summer 4 Peace
Conflict Resolution Training for Youth
August 17-21, 2009

Executive Summary

The Western Justice Center presented Summer 4 Peace, an interactive training held from August 17 to August 21, in conflict resolution specifically for 24 middle and high school students. During this training, Emily Linnemeier and Monya Kian introduced participants to various conflict resolution techniques and processes, such as Negotiation, Mediation, and Restorative Justice.

Day 1: Participants viewed the Pumpkin Patch Skit, performed by actors, and saw that conflicts can become opportunities to understand underlying needs and to maintain positive relationships. This skit enabled participants to become excited about the training, and provided them a framework to absorb the “Understanding Conflict” session, which covered topics such as *What is Conflict?*, *Sources of Conflict*, *Levels of Conflict*, and *The Conflict Cycle*. Students brainstormed various conflicts that they’ve been involved in, as well as their associations (positive/negative/neutral) with various conflicts. Finally, they experimented with their comfort levels, and saw that each person’s comfort level with conflict varies depending on the situation. During the second-half of this first day, participants had the opportunity to engage in a mock negotiation, involving a dispute between a teenager and a parent, and also learn about the various “Approaches to Conflict.”

Day 2: Participants were introduced to “Underlying Needs,” basic needs that when unmet can create conflicts. They brainstormed various material and non-material needs that they have, and then in groups, created conflict scenarios that they performed in front of the entire group while the audience identified the unmet needs that created each conflict. Finally, the participants were introduced to the *Iceberg Model* as a tool for separating disputants’ positions from their underlying needs, and also to the importance of thinking strategically to meet those needs. After lunch, participants were introduced to verbal and non-verbal *Blocks to Listening*, which hinder the exchange of information, and were briefed on essential *Active Listening Skills* that promote the gathering of information required to resolve conflicts. The *iPod Theft Dispute* role-play and the *Gossip Game* allowed participants to practice these specific active listening skills.



Day 3: The training introduced students to five “Conflict Resolution Techniques” and enabled students to act out scenes that involved the application of each of these techniques. Following the skits, participants completed a short story, which provided a further opportunity to apply these techniques, and they collectively used these skills to resolve the *Hallway Fights Dispute*. After lunch, students visualized how they feel when confronted with conflict, and discussed the impact that their “Emotions and Feelings” have on their actions. Thereafter, Emily and I shared with them the importance of breathing when involved in a dispute, and students also shared other regulation strategies they practice.

Day 4: The training commenced with an “Introduction to Mediation” – a demonstration of the mediation process with Emily and Monya resolving a conflict as co-mediators. Thereafter, we delved into the “Practicing Mediation” session, which required all students to use the mediation process to resolve three different conflict scenarios, each varying in intensity and genre, and commissioned them with the task of alternating roles as co-mediators and disputants. Upon completion of the mock mediations, we debriefed together and heard from participants about the techniques that they used to mediate conflicts, the challenges they faced with the process, and also the progress they made as the day progressed.

Day 5: Participants engaged in the “Conflict, Culture, and Identity” session, and an exercise that asked questions about their individual attributes and identities. Thereafter, the *Color Game* revealed to students the challenges of cross-cultural communication, and the potential for tension or conflict given that all cultures possess specific etiquettes and cultural norms that affect identities, behaviors and communication patterns. Lastly, participants learned about another conflict resolution method, “Restorative Justice,” by viewing a short film about its positive influence in conflict-stricken schools and hearing from two guest speakers on the topic. To conclude the day, students engaged in a facilitated dialogue regarding how they would implement the skills that they learned throughout the program in their classrooms and schools. All participants received a certificate and several gifts.

All in all, participants enjoyed the program and demonstrated the knowledge and skills that they gained. They greatly enjoyed the interactive role-plays and activities, and many shared their desire to apply the skills that they gained and to participate in similar programs in the future.