

# CONTROLLING EMOTIONS IN CONFLICTS

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Personal Power Revisited
- Antidotes for Anger and Its Friends
- Change History
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

## Objectives

Students will recognize that they have the power to control their emotions and behaviors.

Students will identify ways to reduce the effects of anger and other negative emotions.

Students will apply methods of controlling emotions and changing reactions to conflict situations.

## Materials Needed

- Students' homework assignments from the last lesson, in which they identified a conflict and the emotions involved (Part III)

**Starter (3 minutes)**

Begin class today by giving students conflicting instructions in quick succession. You might ask students to seat themselves alphabetically by their last names, change your mind and have them seat themselves alphabetically by their first names, and then change your mind again and ask them to take their usual seats.

Afterward, ask students the following questions:

- Were you getting frustrated or feeling stressed?
- Were you beginning to feel angry with me?

Explain that you wanted students to experience stress, anger, and frustration. Say, “Today, we’re going to revisit ways to handle stress, frustration, and anger—feelings that can lead to conflict.”

**Part I Personal Power Revisited (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students recognize that they have the power to control their emotions and behaviors.

**1. Students review personal power.**

Ask students if they recall the lesson earlier in the course in which they discussed personal power (Confidence Building, “Lesson 6: Developing Personal Power”) and made symbols as reminders of their power. Invite students to recall what they learned in that lesson. Through questions and prompts, guide students to recall the following:

- Everyone has the power to make choices.
- The choices one makes will affect one’s own life and often the lives of others.
- Each individual is responsible for the choices that they make.

Point out that personal power can be exercised during conflicts, because conflicts always involve making choices and decisions. Tell students that they have the power to make choices about controlling their emotions and the behaviors those emotions produce.

**2. Students listen to a scenario.**

Have students listen carefully to this hypothetical scenario:

Andre tells you that Patrice said something about you that isn’t true. Andre says that someone in gym class told him about it. Andre also says that this person said that Patrice is calling you a spoiled brat. You go ballistic. You decide to get even by spreading rumors about Patrice!

Say, “I’m going to read the scenario again. This time, when I reach the point where your emotions and behaviors get out of control, call out, ‘Freeze!’” (Students should stop you after the sentence, “You go ballistic.”)

### **3. Students reflect on emotions, behavior, and choices.**

Invite students to brainstorm emotions that are involved in “going ballistic” in this scenario. If necessary, challenge them to look beyond anger and explore feelings that are under the surface by asking, “But why are you feeling so angry?” (Students should respond: because I feel betrayed, insulted, annoyed, confused, disappointed, embarrassed, resentful, shocked, surprised, etc.)

Turn the focus of the discussion to choices by asking the following questions:

- As a result of these feelings, what did you decide to do in the scenario?
- What else could you have done?

Invite students to give as many suggestions as possible.

## **Part II Antidotes for Anger and Its Friends (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students identify ways to reduce the effects of anger and other emotions.

### **1. Students identify strategies for controlling emotions.**

Explain that there are several strategies we can use to control our anger before we make decisions. Invite volunteers to identify strategies that they know about. Write their suggestions on the board. (Students might respond: slowly count backward from 10, take three deep breaths, write down what you are feeling, talk to a friend.)

If necessary, remind students what they learned about handling stress in “Lesson 3: Handling Stress” of Module Four: Managing Personal Resources, and have them find the “Stress Factors” activity sheet from that lesson in their folders. Through questions and prompts, have students review this activity sheet and discuss how the information applies to conflicts. Focus students’ attention on the center column, where they wrote ways to reduce or relieve stress. Invite volunteers to write suggestions that would apply to handling anger and other emotions.

Challenge students to think of other strategies that could help people to control their emotions and curb the destructive behaviors that intense emotions tend to promote. Add these to the list on the board. Your list might reflect the following:

- Slowly count backward from 10.
- Take three deep breaths as you bend over to tie a shoe or pull up a sock.
- Take a step backward and stretch the muscles in your shoulders and your face.
- Walk away.
- Laugh.
- Pinch yourself.
- Stomp your foot on the floor twice.
- Think of something positive about the other person involved.
- Take a time out to gather your thoughts and regain your calm.
- Talk to a friend and vent.
- Go to a quiet place and write about the situation you are experiencing.

### **2. Students reflect on the importance of cooling down.**

Point out that all of these suggestions are ways to make a person stop, think, and cool down before deciding on what to do. Explain that this cooldown time is very important. Invite volunteers to explain why they think it is important. Through discussion, guide students to realize that cooldown time will keep them from saying or doing things that they cannot take back and may regret later, that could escalate the conflict and make it worse, or that could result in negative consequences.

Refer to the list on the board and point out that doing just one of these things will relax the body and the mind and relieve tension, thus diffusing the intensity of emotions. Say, “You can get control of yourself in conflicts. There are always options to consider and choices to make. You are capable of thinking about them and choosing wisely.”

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## **Part III   Change History (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students apply methods of controlling emotions and changing reactions to conflicts.

### **1. Students revise the scenario.**

Explain that students are going to change history. Tell them to take out writing materials. Then, reread a shorter version of the scenario that you discussed earlier:

Andre tells you that Patrice said something about you that isn't true. Andre says that someone in gym class told him about it. Andre also says that this person said that Patrice is calling you a spoiled brat. You go ballistic.

Ask students to describe what they would do next. Ask them to identify decisions they can make to change the ending. Tell students to write a new ending for this scenario based on these decisions.

## **2. Students share their revisions.**

Invite volunteers to share what they wrote. Encourage other students to express support or ideas of their own.

Comment on similarities and differences that you observe among the new endings. For example, you might point out the number of different ways that students used to cool down. You might also point out that most students made similar decisions after cooling down.

## **3. Students rewrite the conflicts they described.**

Ask students to take out the conflicts they wrote about, which you assigned as homework during Part III of Lesson 2. Ask students if they think cooldown time would have helped in these situations. Have them add a short paragraph to their writing, explaining what the people involved could have done to cool down and how it would have affected the conflict. If a student describes someone in the conflict as calm and in control of their emotions, have the student write about what might have happened if the person hadn't been calm and in control.

If time permits, have students complete this assignment in class. Otherwise, have students complete this assignment as homework.

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to reflect on the list of ways to cool down and to identify strategies that would work for them. Suggest that they make a note of these strategies and use them the next time they feel themselves involved in a conflict. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- You have the power to control your emotions and the behaviors they produce.
- There are strategies to control anger when you reach your limit. Use them.
- In conflicts, there are always options to consider and choices to make. You are capable of thinking about them and choosing wisely.

### Student Assessment

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1. List three things that make you angry. Why do they make you angry?
2. How can knowing why you are angry be helpful to you?
3. List three strategies for cooling down.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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“Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.”

Discuss the meaning of this quote as a class. Tell students that conflict doesn't always have to result in arguments or fighting. Ask students to describe how controlling emotions in a conflict can prevent it from escalating.

### Math Connection

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Have students plot line graphs depicting the intensity of emotions in conflict situations. At each point, students are to identify what action is occurring and what emotion is being demonstrated.

Have students plot another line on the same graph. Each point on this line should identify an action, the emotion, and a strategy to control that emotion. Have students compare the two lines.

### Writing in Your Journal

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Have students write a letter to someone who has made them angry. Have them read it and then rip it up.

Have students describe how they feel now that they have written, read, and ripped up their letters.

### Homework

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Explain to students that “mensch” is a Yiddish word that means “wonderful person.” Tell students that everyone knows derogatory words to call others. Ask, “Do you know any complimentary words you can use to describe others?”

Have students brainstorm a list of complimentary words in any language. Tell them to list as many as they can.

## Additional Resources

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Show students paintings by David Hockney, Andrew Wyeth, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Keith Haring.  
Have students discuss how these works make them feel.