

Avoiding Conflict: Week 2

Month: Sept.

Week #: 5

Day: a. Mon. Time: 30 min.

A Magic Formula

Life Tree Learning Systems ©

Objectives/Aims

The students will: learn a 'magic' formula for avoiding conflicts and apply it to several real-life situations.

Materials

none

Illustration

I wonder who this woman is? She looks old enough to be my grandma! What does it say on the front and on the back of her tunic? She looks very content and happy.

Background

This activity is based on the words of the 'Peace Pilgrim,' a person who walked more than 25,000 miles across this country spreading her message of peace. She believed that one way that conflicts could be avoided was by following this magic formula: *"Be primarily concerned that you do not offend others instead of worrying about being offended."*



Group Activity

1. Below is a suggested list of role-playing situations. After each role-play ask the students how they would feel if someone did this to them and how each potential conflict could have been avoided.

- A. A student stomps into the room where several students are quietly working.
- B. Without asking, a student reaches across and takes another student's dessert.
- C. Several students are sitting together making fun of another student.
- D. A student says that he is saving a spot for someone else.
- E. One student laughs at another's work.

2. Say, "All of these conflicts could have been avoided if the people had been thinking about the other person instead of themselves. There was a person by the name of Peace Pilgrim that walked 25,000 miles across this country spreading her message of peace. Included in her message was a magic formula for avoiding conflict which was: *"Be primarily concerned that you do not offend others instead of worrying about being offended."*

3. Have the students repeat the magic formula several times both individually and as a group.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Who can explain the magic formula in their own words?
 - A. Think about being nice to others, instead of worrying about people not being nice to you.

Variations/Extensions

1. Students can fold pieces of blank paper into frames. They can then draw pictures of various situations that could cause a conflict. Finished drawings can be shared, and the other students can comment on how these conflicts could have been avoided.

Conclusion

Say, "Okay, let's conclude by saying the magic formula together: *Be primarily concerned that you do not offend others instead of worrying about being offended.*"

1 Peace Pilgrim, Her Life and Her Own Words, Santa Fe, Ocean Tree Books



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Objectives/Aims

By the end of this unit, your child will learn a ‘magic’ formula for avoiding conflicts, recognize that a strong person takes responsibility for his or her mistakes and says “sorry”, agree to disagree with another and remain agreeable, recognize and avoid power struggles and avoid excluding others.

Background Information for Parents

The Peace Pilgrim, was a person who walked more than 25,000 miles across this country spreading her message of peace. She believed that one way that conflicts could be avoided was by following this ‘magic’ formula: *“Be primarily concerned that you do not offend others instead of worrying about being offended.”*¹

Given that we have finite knowledge, a tendency towards self-centeredness and other assorted human weaknesses, we will make mistakes and offend and hurt others from time to time. What often exacerbates the situation and causes a conflict is when we don’t or won’t ‘own up’ to our mistakes. This pride is often what stands in the way of actually healing the situation.



Recognizing that we will need to apologize from time to time should make it easier to graciously accept other people’s apologies. Along with this recognition is the realization that it is not easy to apologize. We should not endeavor to ‘rub someone’s face in the dirt’ when that person is courageous enough to admit fault.

Day 1

1) Who is the lady in the picture? _____

2) What was her ‘magic’ rule for avoiding conflicts? (You don’t have to use her exact words.)

Day 2

1) Tell the fictional story of George Washington and the cherry tree to your parents. Make sure you include the mistake he made, why he was strong, and how he healed his relationship with his father. P.I. _____

(over)

Background Information for Parents

Open and honest discussion and debate have always been an important component of a democratic society. When the participants become defensive and angry, however, and the discussion turns into an argument, neither party benefits. In fact, arguments can turn friends into foes and close minds in such a way that further dialogue and learning is impossible.

As a class, we delved deeper into this topic by dealing with power struggles. These can happen for any number of reasons. They can be caused when people take an uncompromising stance based on their strongly held beliefs and values, hierarchical position and status, different perceptions of the situation,

or need for control. Often, their stance is deeply rooted in ‘who they are,’ so it is accompanied by a fair amount of emotional intensity. Because of the emotional intensity, these power struggles can elicit feelings of anger, and in their extreme, resentment and violence.

We also discovered that humans, by their very nature, are social beings. We need to be part of a group. When a person cannot find a place within a social group or when they feel excluded, they are generally very unhappy.



Day 3

1) Look at the picture. What do Number 7 and the boy with glasses disagree about?

2) How were they able to remain friends even if they disagreed?

3) Tell your parents two possible causes of a power struggle and how they can be avoided.
P.I. _____

In preparation of the last day’s lesson:

4) Draw a picture, using the bottom of this page, of a group of students excluding another student. If you don’t know what the word ‘exclude’ means, ask your parents.