Name _____   Date _____   Class _____

Activity 36

How to Handle a Conflict

Directions: Form groups of four students. As a group, read through the following scenario. Then assign each group member the role of one of the four workers—Tony, Chris, Monica, or Emilio—and answer the questions that follow.

Donovan Wright, owner and manager of the Wright-Mart Superstore, called the four workers from the menswear department into a meeting before work on a Tuesday morning. "I'm not satisfied with the quality of the work being done in your department," he said. "The sales floor is a mess. It's taking far too long for clothes to get back onto the racks from the fitting rooms, and then they usually end up in the wrong places. On top of that, customers are starting to complain that they can never find a salesclerk when they need one."

The manager looked sternly at the crew. "I can't look over your shoulder every minute. Running this store is a big job, and I have a lot of other concerns to deal with. I know that you're having some problems working together, but I expect each of you to do the best job you can. Anyone who isn't willing to do that has no future at this store. Is that understood?"

Donovan glanced at his watch. "I have a sales meeting now," he said. "Before the store opens, I want you all to talk through your problems and find a way to work together. I expect this to be solved by the time I come back here back this afternoon."

1. On your own, read through your assigned character's viewpoint on the next page. Then fill out the chart below with information about your character and his or her situation.

Values	Goals	Facts	Perceptions

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CREATIVE LIVING SKILLS—Management Skills

Tony's View

Tony was so sick of his coworkers he was about ready to explode. Chris was usually late for work, and when he did come in he was always sneaking off for a break or chatting with the customers instead of working. Monica was always up on her high horse, criticizing everyone else's work and bossing them around. She even redid other people's work behind their backs, like it wasn't good enough for her. Emilio acted like he was perfect, always trying to get on the boss's good side. Tony was just glad he was Donovan's cousin. There was no way Donovan was going to fire him. He just wanted to get through the day, then go home and watch TV.

Chris's View

Chris couldn't believe this was happening. He wished he had called in sick or at least come to work late. He looked over at Tony, who looked furious. He hoped Tony wasn't going to start flinging the merchandise all over the place the way he sometimes did when he got mad. Monica just looked concerned, which didn't surprise him. She was a single mom with a child to support; she couldn't afford to lose her job. He wondered if maybe the reason they had gotten the lecture was that Emilio had complained to Donovan about their work. There was no doubt Emilio did the best work on the team. Probably he was just trying to make everyone else look bad.

Chris didn't want to deal with this now. He started to head outside for a break. Tony shouted after him, "Hey Chris, get back here! You can't just walk away from this!"

Monica's View

Monica was mad. She needed this job, and she knew the problems weren't her fault. She was tired of having to run around after Tony and Chris fixing the clothes that they had misfiled on the racks. At least Emilio knew what he was doing. She didn't have time to correct three people's work and do her own job, too. She knew that the rest of the team didn't like her very much, but she wasn't going to let that bother her. She had a job to do and she couldn't afford to worry about what other people thought of her. She just needed to get the boss to understand that there was nothing wrong with her work.

Emilio's View

Donovan's lecture came as no surprise to Emilio. He had seen this coming for some time. He just wasn't sure how the crew could work out their problems. Emilio was tired of picking up the slack for Chris and Tony. Chris wasn't pulling his weight on the job, and Tony did everything halfheartedly. Monica was different. She worked hard and did her job well, but she was so bossy that she got on everyone's nerves.

Emilio wanted to get ahead in his job. If he could help the team work through its problems, maybe he could get a promotion. Emilio looked at his coworkers. Tony and Monica looked angry, and Chris was trying to slip out the door. Emilio shook his head. Fixing this wasn't going to be easy, but if they didn't do something, they could all be out of a job.

2. As a group, consider all four aspects of this problem (context, desired ends, means, and consequences). Then use the REASON process to help the four team members work through their problems. On a separate piece of paper, answer the following questions:

Recognize the primary problem.

- What is the primary problem?
- Are there other interrelated problems?
- Why is it important to address the problem?
- Who is affected by the problem? Who will be affected by possible solutions?

Evaluate information.

- Whose values affect this problem? What are those values?
- Whose goals affect this problem? What are those goals?
- What other factors affect the problem?

Analyze choices and consequences.

- What choices are possible?
- What are the consequences of these choices for each person involved?
- Are the consequences long-term or short-term?
- Are the consequences positive or negative?

Select the best choice.

- Which choice best reflects everyone's values and goals?
- Which choice has the most positive outcome for all concerned?
- What is the team's best choice? Explain how this choice solves the problem.
- Would this choice change if the circumstances were different?

Outline and take action.

- What steps are needed to reach the solution?
- What role must each person play in carrying out the plan?
- What skills are needed to carry out this plan?
- What resources are needed to carry out this plan?
- What barriers might prevent the team from taking action? How can they overcome those barriers?

Note the results of action taken.

- Did the solution keep everyone's interests in mind?
- Were the actions of the team ethical?
- How will this experience affect the team's problem solving in the future?

(Continued on next page)

3. Did all the members of your group agree on the same solution? Why or why not?

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4. How did you deal with conflicting views within your group?

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5. What would you do differently in your group next time?

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Follow-Up

On the lines below, explain what you think you learned from this activity. How did it affect your understanding of problem solving in groups?

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