

## TIME TO CALM DOWN

Giving yourself a “time out” period to cool off and calm down during a conflict can be very useful in controlling emotions that can spin out of control. A time-out period can give you the opportunity to think rationally about the conflict.

Everyone needs to find safe ways to release angry feelings. Some people like to mow the lawn, go for a walk, listen to music, go rollerblading, write in a journal, knead bread, play a musical instrument, paint, or hit tennis balls against a wall. Each person’s strategy for handling angry feelings is different. What works well to “defuse” one person may not have the same effect on another.

**Directions:** Think about the ways that you release anger without hurting yourself or others. Some of the ideas mentioned above may work for you, or you may have other ideas. Complete the chart below by listing three strategies you now use to release anger in a healthful way. Then, list three other strategies that you would like to try. For each strategy, describe a situation in which it would work best.

Strategies for Defusing Anger	When It Works (Could Work) Best
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

## Chapter 7 Conflict Prevention

### Enrichment Activities

# MEDIATORS: A VOICE OF REASON

While headed for class one day, Matt realized he had forgotten his math book. He borrowed Angie's as he passed her in the hall. She told him to be sure to meet at her locker after class to return the book, because she had to have it for her class. When Angie did not show up, Matt needed to get on to his class, so he left the book in front of Angie's locker. After school, Angie confronted Matt about the book. It was gone, and Angie was angry. Voices were raised and tempers flared. Angie wanted Matt to pay for a new book, but Matt didn't feel he was responsible for the loss.

To settle their disagreement, Matt and Angie took their case to a student mediator. This is a student who has been given special training to help other students resolve conflicts peacefully. The mediator hears all sides of the dispute and helps generate possible solutions. Once an agreement has been reached, all parties involved must abide by the terms of the decision.

Danita was a student mediator at Angie and Matt's school. She sat down with them and listened while each told a side of the story. Each continued to blame the other for the loss of the book. Danita, however, did not focus on their disagreement. Instead, she encouraged them to think of ways of solving the problem. Together they came up with three possible solutions:

1. Matt could pay for a new book because his borrowing resulted in the loss.
2. Angie could buy a new book because she had not met Matt as promised.
3. Matt and Angie could each pay part of the cost.

Danita offered a fourth possibility. They could look into buying a used book, which would save some of the costs, and then split the price in half. Although this was not a perfect solution for either party, it became an acceptable one to both under the circumstances. Both had made mistakes that Danita helped them see and take responsibility for.

You can use some mediation techniques to resolve conflicts of your own. Try these ideas:

- Role play all sides of the issue. This forces you to see different points of view.
- Listen to opposing views without saying a word. Then restate in your own words what you think the other person is saying. Have all sides do this. This helps you understand other positions and helps clarify your own position to yourself.
- Try to figure out why you feel as you do about the issue. Does it conflict with your values? Do you feel you have been wronged? Are you just trying to get your way?
- Try to imagine yourself in the other person's position. Can you understand the other's thoughts and feelings? Would you feel the same if you found yourself in the other person's situation?

### Focus In

1. How could mediation skills come in handy in your life today? As an adult?
2. What kinds of problems at school would lend themselves to mediation?
3. Do you think children should be taught mediation skills? Why or why not?
4. How and when could mediation skills have helped you as a child? Give a specific example.

**Project:** Find out more about peer mediation programs and how to start one in your high school (if one isn't already in place).