



A Lesson on Communication, Calm, and Building a Competitive Advantage by Navigating Tension Effectively



Introduction for the Facilitator

Conflict is inevitable. The question isn't whether it will happen, but how we respond when it does. **Conflict resolution** is one of the most valued **professional skills**, especially in careers where teamwork, customer interaction, and leadership matter.

This lesson helps college students and workforce learners view conflict not as something to fear or avoid, but as a growth moment. With clarity, empathy, and strategy, learners can transform conflict into connection, learning, and leadership.

Conflict resolution strengthens a learner's **personal competitive advantage** by proving they can manage difficult situations, preserve relationships, and maintain professionalism under pressure.

Adult learners in college and workforce development environments will benefit from this lesson on conflict resolution, which includes:

- A relatable Scenario to show why conflict resolution is essential
- 8 Guided Group Discussion Questions with follow-up questions
- 8 Journal Prompts to deepen understanding of how to navigate conflict constructively
- 8 personal Skill-Building Strategies
- A printable Action Planner for reflection and application



Scenario: The Group Clash

Talia, 21, is in a project-based business course. Her group includes a classmate who keeps missing deadlines and delivering low-quality work. Talia feels frustrated, but doesn't want to cause drama.

Instead of venting or avoiding, she asks for a quick team meeting. She names the problem respectfully, offers support, and asks for ideas to move forward. The group agrees to reset expectations. Over the next few weeks, performance improves.

Later, her professor pulls her aside: "That's real leadership. Conflict will always happen; it's how we handle it that turns it into an opportunity."



Guided Group Discussion Questions

1. **What feelings or thoughts come up when you hear the word conflict?**
Follow-up: How do those reactions affect your approach?
2. **Why is avoiding conflict often more damaging than addressing it?**
Follow-up: Have you seen this play out?
3. **What are some healthy ways to bring up a conflict or concern?**
Follow-up: What language or tone makes a difference?
4. **How does resolving conflict well increase someone's personal competitive advantage?**
Follow-up: What do teams, supervisors, or clients notice?
5. **What's the difference between reacting and responding in a conflict?**
Follow-up: How can we pause before we speak?
6. **What role do listening and empathy play in conflict resolution?**
Follow-up: How do you stay open when you feel frustrated?
7. **What are common conflict resolution mistakes? How can we avoid them?**
Follow-up: What's one lesson you've learned from handling conflict poorly?
8. **What's a current or past situation where resolving conflict improved trust or results?**
Follow-up: What did you do that worked?



Journal Prompts

1. **Describe a conflict you handled well. What helped you stay calm or constructive?**
2. **What's your typical response when tension starts to rise?**
3. **What's one conflict in your life you wish you had approached differently?**
4. **What beliefs help you stay grounded in hard conversations?**
5. **What's your goal when you enter a conflict conversation?**
6. **Who do you know that resolves conflict well? What can you learn from them?**
7. **What boundaries help you stay respectful when emotions are high?**
8. **How could stronger conflict resolution skills help you succeed in work, school, or life?**



Skill-Building Strategies

1. **Name It Without Blame:** Use "I" statements: "I noticed deadlines are slipping," instead of "You're always late."
2. **Breathe + Brief Pause:** Before responding in a heated moment, pause, take a breath, and respond thoughtfully.
3. **Conflict Script Builder:** Write out what you want to say before a difficult conversation. Include a solution or request.
4. **Assume Positive Intent:** Ask, "What might they be dealing with that I don't see?" to stay open.
5. **Stay on the Issue:** Focus on one topic or event—not personality, history, or unrelated issues.
6. **Third-Party Feedback:** Practice conflict scenarios with a mentor or peer and ask for honest feedback.
7. **Repair + Reset:** After resolution, check in with the person: "How are we moving forward together?"
8. **Body Language Awareness:** Notice tone, posture, and facial expressions. Use open, non-threatening signals.



20: THE POWER OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Your Action Plan for Professionalism and Competitive Advantage

Action Planner

Reflect and Prepare

Name: _____

What Is Conflict Resolution?

Conflict resolution means managing tension in a respectful, clear, and productive way. It strengthens relationships, reduces stress, and grows your personal competitive advantage.

Why This Matters to Me

Why is conflict resolution important in your current or future life?

My Conflict Habits

When conflict shows up, I tend to: _____

What works about my approach: _____

What I'd like to handle better: _____

Belief Shift

Circle or write a belief to support your growth in conflict situations:

"Hard conversations build stronger teams."

"My tone and words shape the outcome."

"I can be calm and clear, even when it's tense."

"Resolving conflict is part of leadership."

Other: _____



20: THE POWER OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Your Action Plan for Professionalism and Competitive Advantage

Action Planner

Conflict Practice + Progress

Name: _____

My 28-Day Conflict Resolution Focus

What situation, skill, or habit will you improve this month?

What conversation or strategy will you try? _____

How will you reflect or track your experience?

☐ Journal ☐ Practice notes ☐ Mentor feedback ☐ Personal reflection

Restart Plan

When I feel triggered or overwhelmed in conflict, I will:

☐ Pause and breathe

☐ Use my anchor phrase: "Clarity over conflict."

☐ Choose one respectful action or question

☐ Other: _____

Weekly Reflection Prompts

1. What conflict or tension came up this week and how did I handle it?

2. What worked well in how I responded?

3. What would I try differently next time?

4. How did this impact my confidence, team, or outcome?

28-Day Conflict Tracker

Focus situation or skill: _____

Week 1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 1 go? Circle one word:

☒ Calm ☒ Reactive ☒ Respectful
☒ Avoidant ☒ Direct ☒ Growing

Week 3 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 3 go? Circle one word:

☒ Calm ☒ Reactive ☒ Respectful
☒ Avoidant ☒ Direct ☒ Growing

Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 2 go? Circle one word:

☒ Calm ☒ Reactive ☒ Respectful
☒ Avoidant ☒ Direct ☒ Growing

Week 4 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 4 go? Circle one word:

☒ Calm ☒ Reactive ☒ Respectful
☒ Avoidant ☒ Direct ☒ Growing