

# ▲ Conflict ▲

## And Communication Guidelines

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**Objectives:** LEAD participants will know how to handle conflict and will have guidelines to help them communicate effectively.

**Plan ahead:**

- Time required: 60-70 min, depending on Learning Task 2
- Copy Handling Conflict Worksheet, p.7 (if not in LEADs' notebooks)

**Before this lesson, LEADs must:**

- Read the 12 Commands of Communication

**Supplies:**

- Nail files (or emery boards) - one for each LEAD
- Newsprint or white board and pens

**Accompanying documents:**

- Comm - 12 Cmds (12 Commandments of Communication)
  - 12 Commandments Worksheet (Page 6 of this file)
  - Handling Conflict Worksheet (Page 7 of this file)
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❖ **Get Started (hook; 5 min)**

(Hand out emery boards and ask the girls to file their nails. Show them how, if necessary. Let them do it for a minute or two and ask a few questions as they do.)

What is it that makes an emery board work? How does it work? (Sandpaper wears down the nail and forms it into a nice shape)

How is the emery board similar to how God arranges events in our lives to shape us? (God gives us the event. Our **responses** to events (how we use the file), not the events themselves, mold and shape us. This is a neat parallel, but not the main point of this lesson. Just "idle" conversation while we use our hands.)

(The following exercise is to set up groups that contain folks who love conflict and folks who hate it. In order to create the groups, do the following exercise: the LEADs will place themselves on a line across the room that corresponds to their answer. "Yes!" is on one side, "No!" is on the other. And varying answers of less passion are in the middle, in the appropriate place between "yes" and "no".)

- Do you like the color pink? (Place yourself on the line in the appropriate spot based on how you feel about pink.)
- Do you like school? (Ditto.)
- Do you like filing your nails? (Ditto.) Can someone tell me why it works to use a file on your nails? (Get an answer or two while they stay where they were on the line.) Sure, nail filing works because there is FRICTION between the sand and the nail, right? And in this case friction is good! Now, consider friction *between people*. Conflict. Intense discussion. Facing differences.

- How do you feel about *conflict*? ("Love it" on one end, "Avoid it at all costs" on the other)

(Affirm their placement, wherever it is.) Some of us love it when we have differences to chew on, some of us are okay with it. Some of us just don't really like it. And some have left the room to avoid even talking about it!

But the fact is, any time we attempt to move a group of people in a common direction, which is the goal of any LEADship...there will be *friction*. In order to make nails beautiful, there is friction. But the end result is beautiful. In order to accomplish a goal, or to move in a positive direction, there will be *conflict*. Handled properly, conflict can even be good - it can make the end result far better. So let's look at HOW to handle CONFLICT.

We'll be in groups again, so from one side of the room to the other, count off from 1 to X. (What you count to depends on how many LEADs there are; you want 3-4 in each group. Collect the emery boards and hand out the Worksheets, one to each group. Tell each group where to sit.)

### ❖ Learn / observe (book / look; 2 parts: 20 min / 25-35 min)

**(Part 1: Resolving Conflict, 20 min)** So let's consider conflict a bit and then look at some communication rules to improve our relationships. Remember the LEADship Definitions? Look in your notebooks if you need to.

What is *communication*? (The TOOL LEADs use to move people toward the goal)

What is *relationship*? (The VEHICLE through which communication flows)

So the better we can communicate, the better we will be able to use the tool that motivates people to move, and the more effective we'll be as a LEAD.

And the stronger the relationships, the more communication can flow. The more communication flows, the more we can move people toward the goal, and the more effective we'll be as LEADs. Avoided conflict blocks communication. Unresolved conflict threatens communication. So let's look at how to resolve and benefit from conflict.

Is conflict resolution biblical? Well, to figure that out, let's see what happens when we don't resolve conflict? Does everyone walk away happily? No. Bad feeling and bad thoughts fester. And then come out in nasty ways. Some people totally bury conflict and develop mental, emotional or health issues. Some people go talk about it to other people, which might lead to slander or gossip. Some people gather a group around them and create divisions. Other people dive into conflict in a negative way, leading to quarreling, strife, anger and worse. Let's see what the Bible says about these actions:

**1Corinthians 3:3** *For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?*

**2Corinthians 12:20** *For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.*

**Galatians 5:19** *Now the works of the flesh are evident: ... 20 ... enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 .... I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

**James 4:1** *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2...You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.*

The way to avoid all of these negative interactions between people is to be willing to enter into the conflict and deal with it. To resolve it.

And finally, **Matthew 5:9** *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*

Please note, Blessed are NOT the *peaceKEEPERS* who **avoid** the conflict. Blessed are the *peaceMAKERS* who enter into the conflict and **resolve** it.

So now that we know God's perspective on conflict resolution, let's look at the type of conflict we experience most often when we work with a group, or when we *lead*: the emery board conflict. Opinions differ in your group. Different people have different ideas. There is friction. But like the emery board, good can come of that friction.

LEARNING TASK 1: In your groups, talk about each of the questions. In your group, there is a range of opinions on conflict, so listen to what your fellow LEADs say. Try to understand their perspective because there will be people you are trying to lead one day who feel this way. You'll have 10 min to work on this then we'll regroup and summarize.

(Regroup and summarize on the board. Show LEADs the notes on the bottom of their handout (below).)

**(Worksheet, p.7) Conflict is like an emery board**

- Conflict between people that results from differing opinions and ideas is NORMAL.
- The friction of hearing and considering *everyone's* ideas can make the result BETTER.
- How to have healthy conflict:
  - ASK for ideas, especially from quiet thinkers
  - AFFIRM the people who speak (compliment, thank, nod, etc.)
  - No negative personal comments (See the 12 Commands of Communication)
  - Focus on the ISSUE and its solution

- Why do you like conflict? (Get a few answers)

- What do you dread about conflict? (Get a few answers)

- Is there a group of people who all have identical opinions and ideas? (No. Conflict, therefore, is NORMAL! Fill in the blank on the bottom of the Handling Conflict page.)

- What benefits come from us talking about our different opinions or ideas? (Better results! Fill in the blank... For example, if you are running an evening activity for camp, you might end up with an even more fun activity. If you are raising funds for a school play, you might raise even more funds. If you are designing a LEADship syllabus, you'll end up with more effective and fun lessons!)

- What dangers are there in volunteering your opinion or ideas? (Ridicule, embarrassment, the silence of disapproval...)

- How might a LEAD encourage everyone to offer their ideas or opinions? (Ask, affirm those who speak, do not allow / counter negative comments about people, stick to only the *issue*, set ground rules for communication. That will be addressed more later.)

- How might a LEAD encourage good conflict? (Ask questions, affirm differing opinions, remind the group that conflict is good, ensure that the discussion stays on solving the problem - not comments about people or their ideas)

We heard earlier how the Bible speaks against what happens when we don't enter into and resolve conflict. Now we are seeing how working through conflict can result in good **counsel**. Is it biblical to seek counsel? To work together toward a solution? (get a nod or two...) **Proverbs 15:22** says, *Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.*

**Summary:** Bottom line, we will arrive at the best solution only if we all offer our ideas, then wrestle with what will work best. In order for us to do that, we need to stick to the issue, and never comment nor permit comments, on another person's character or personality.

We need to be very *intentional* about what we say (that's part of Ownership!).

**(Part 2: Communication Guidelines, 25-35 min, depending on the learning task)**

- But how often does conflict get out of line and become negative? (With some degree of regularity.)

- Why does that happen? (Get some answers, but bottom line, because people's *communication* falls apart.)

- Are there some guidelines we might be able to set around communication to help keep it going in a positive direction? What might be some good guidelines? (Affirm their ideas, and where possible point out one of the 12 Commandments that they have hit on.) **Psalms 141:3** says, *Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!*

In your notebooks is a page titled, "12 Commandments of Communication." Open to that and you'll see some of the ideas you just came up with (if they did.)

On the top of the page is guidance from the Handbook for Life, The Bible. **Ephesians 4:29** tells us to *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* That's written before the first commandment on your page.

That's great guidance, obviously. Now let's dig in a little deeper and consider some tools to help *build other people up* and *give grace to those who hear*. On your 12 Commandments page, there are 12 guidelines to help with communication and to help preserve relationships. We'll look at one together as an example, then divide them up and let you present the rest to the group.

Let's start with #2, "Level 5". One theory says that there are five levels of communication. Level 1 is simple, like "Hey, how are you?" Level 2 and 3 get into more depth and familiarity. Level 4 is very open and honest, even intimate. Level 5 goes beyond that to where communication might hurt the recipient. For example, your friend is interested in a guy who you know is bad for her. You care deeply about your friend and her heart, and you know this guy would hurt her, or worse.

If you flip the page and look at the explanation, it gives some ideas for making this conversation with your friend less unpleasant, or maybe even something positive for your relationship with her. Start by praying and considering some good things about your friend and about the guy. Then find a quiet time and place and ask if you can speak with your friend for a few minutes. When that time arrives, start and end with positive things, like "I really appreciate who you are and your passionate heart. And I think this guy is a looker as well. I'm concerned, though, that he may not really be interested in what is best for you. It seems to me that he's more in it for what he can get. I just don't want you to get hurt. What do you think?"

As the conversation goes on, look to close it with something else positive to say about your friend so that this part of the conversation ends on a positive note.

Do you see how "Level 5" works? Find a time when you can talk alone and uninterrupted; ask permission to speak about something difficult so that the other person can prepare themselves or say they cannot listen right now; sandwich the hard stuff between compliments.

Like the other "Commandments," it's a short phrase that contains in it a reminder about how to use the tool of communication more effectively, and how to preserve or improve your relationships.

LEARNING TASK 2: Now it's your turn.

(Re-split the group, if necessary, into either 4 or 6 groups, of 2-4 people each. Give each group 1 "Commandment" to illustrate in a 1 minute skit. Give them 5 min to prepare. Answer any questions the LEADs may have as they prepare. Have each group perform their skit, then tell how their "Commandment" helped the situation and protected - or even improved - the relationships involved. If there are key points to bring out that help people understand the "commandment", bring those out before the next group goes. Repeat the exercise until all the "12 Commandments" have been explained.)

### ❖ **Get Practical (took, 5 min)**

Now that we have an idea what these communication guidelines are about, let's make them more personal. One your own, put a + beside the "command" or "commands" that you feel you are already good at.

And put a - next to one or two that you think would help you the most, if you were to practice them regularly.

(While they do this, write 1-12 on the board and a + and - below each. Once everyone is done...) Now let's see which are our strengths and what we'll be working on (smile!). As I call out the number, if it is a strength for you, stand up and strike the "I'm strong" pose. If it is something you'd like to work on, get up on a knee and pretend to be a rock climber grabbing the holds and hauling herself up. If it is neither, stay seated. (Go thru the numbers, counting

number of girls for whom this is a strength and who would like to work on each, until you have all the numbers. Comment on the groups' strengths and weaknesses and maybe how they might learn from each other. Reiterate that all this is working toward better *communication* for the purpose of resolving conflict, all of which helps us help us improve both our LEADship and who we are in accordance with Ephesians 4:29 *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*)

### ❖ Homework (follow up assignment)

We'll pay special attention to these guidelines at dinner tonight as we have some intentional discussion.

You also have a Worksheet to fill in whenever you intentionally use one of these guidelines. Pay special attention to your conversations - any conversations. These can be with other LEADs or with other kids in your activities or somewhere else. Whenever you use one of these guidelines, jot down which one, the date and a short description of what happened. The commandments are numbered at the top of the page for you, so just write the number of the one you used. When you are done, turn them in to your LEAD coordinator no later than Monday at Kick Back time.

What questions do you have?

# ▲ 12 Commandments Worksheet ▲

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. CRITICAL PAUSE                                       | 7. The 110% RULE: When we all give 110%, we all win      |
| 2. LEVEL 5  | 8. ASSUME the BEST                                       |
| 3. NO INTERRUPTING                                      | 9. It's better to be HAPPY than right (or ...than heard) |
| 4. NO TEASING   | 10. Brutal HONESTY is just brutal                        |
| 5. Is it True? Is it Necessary? Is it Nice?             | 11. FOCUS on the 90% positive not the 10% negative       |
| 6. While you speak, think, WAIT:<br>(Why Am I Talking?) | 12. Listen, don't fix it                                 |

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Cmdment #: \_\_\_\_\_ What happened? \_\_\_\_\_ How did the command help? \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ #: \_\_\_\_\_ What happened? \_\_\_\_\_ How did the command help? \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ #: \_\_\_\_\_ What happened? \_\_\_\_\_ How did the command help? \_\_\_\_\_

# ▲ Handling Conflict Worksheet ▲

Why do you like conflict?

What do you dread about conflict?

Is there a group of people who all have identical opinions and ideas?

What benefits come from us talking about our different opinions or ideas?

What dangers are there in volunteering your opinion or ideas?

How might a LEAD encourage everyone to offer their ideas or opinions?

How might a LEAD encourage good conflict?

## **Conflict is like an emery board**

- Conflict between people that results from differing opinions and ideas is \_\_\_\_\_.
- The friction of hearing and considering *everyone's* ideas can make the result \_\_\_\_\_.
- How to have healthy conflict:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ for ideas, especially from quiet thinkers
  - \_\_\_\_\_ the people who speak (compliment, thank, nod, etc.)
  - No negative personal comments (See the 12 Commandments of Communication)
  - Focus on the \_\_\_\_\_ and its solution

**Proverbs 15:22** *Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.*