



PedPilots - Self-regulated Learning Guide for Educators

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PedPilots - "Training for accompanying teachers"
Teaching unit 9.

Conflict management during field trips

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The 12 chapters of our workbook are available on the project website, where they can be downloaded and used free of charge. We recommend Genially as a digital, independently processable teaching resource.

<https://www.pedpilot.eu/>



<https://view.genially.com/6885f7076f6692a268885f03>



9. Conflict management during field trips

Introduction

School trips, including international trips, offer students and teachers a unique opportunity to learn about other cultures, make new friends and develop their personalities and social skills. However, these trips can bring not only joyful experiences but also challenges, especially when diverse groups live together. The different customs, communication styles and expectations of participants from different backgrounds can easily lead to misunderstandings, tensions or even open conflicts.

It is therefore particularly important that participants – especially accompanying teachers – are prepared to prevent and manage conflicts effectively. Well-managed conflicts not only strengthen group cohesion, but also provide valuable learning opportunities for young people, developing their empathy, self-awareness and problem-solving skills. Creating a supportive, open and safe environment contributes to the success of the programme and the positive experiences of participants.

Objectives

- Participants learn about the most common conflict situations at camp.
- learn to recognise the early signs of conflict
- learn effective communication and mediation techniques
- learn about conflict prevention tools
- practise dealing with different situations through role-playing

Time allocated for the teaching unit

90-135 minutes

Learning outcomes

- Participants will be able to recognise early signs of conflict in a camp environment and distinguish between different types of conflict (e.g. value-based, emotional, conflict of interest).
- They are able to use effective communication tools (active listening, I-messages, assertive communication) to prevent or resolve emerging tensions.
- Consciously apply different conflict management strategies (e.g. compromise, cooperation, mediation) according to the situation and the needs of the participants.
- Increases empathy and cultural sensitivity, thus better understanding the motivations behind the behaviour of campers from different backgrounds.
- Becomes more confident in handling tense situations, able to calmly intervene and moderate conflicts within the camp group.
- You will be able to recognise your own conflict management style and reflect on how it affects group dynamics.
- They are able to create a positive, supportive atmosphere in which campers feel safe and become more open to discussing problems.

The curriculum through exercises

Theoretical background – The nature of conflict

The concept of conflict

Conflict is a clash that stems from opposing demands, intentions, desires, aspirations, interests, needs, views, opinions and values (Szekszárdi 1995, 1996). Fighting and clashes occur when the behaviour of the parties involved prevents one or both of them from asserting their demands, or when their values differ (Gordon 1994).

The frequency of conflicts depends on the general level of tension in the institution, group or personal environment. Conflict research must therefore examine the atmosphere, value system, spirit, climate and cohesion of the organisation, as well as the empathy, communication and relationship-building skills and tolerance of the group members. The existence of conflicts is also a consequence of certain psychological and social psychological laws, insofar as the laws governing the development of group processes themselves carry the potential for conflict, while at the same time, as we age, the succession of life stages cannot take place without conflict. Taking these laws into account and studying them can facilitate and make conflict management more effective (Deutch 1998).

The stages of conflict and their possible solutions can often be managed through a structured series of steps. One of the most effective models is the **7-step approach**, which helps to identify, understand and constructively manage conflicts. Here are the 7 steps of conflict management:

1. Recognising the conflict

- Goal: To become aware that a conflict exists.
- Characteristics: Tension, disagreement, unpleasant feelings.
- Important: Do not deny it or sweep it under the carpet.

2. Analysis of the conflict

- Objective: To understand the nature, causes and participants of the conflict.
- Questions:
 - What triggered it?
 - Who is involved?
 - What interests and needs have been harmed?
- Tool: Communication, active listening.

3. Involvement of the parties

- Objective: To motivate those involved in the conflict to seek a solution.
- Important: Voluntary participation, building trust.

4. Formulating a joint CL

- Objective: To define an objective that is acceptable to all parties.
- Example: "We would like to work together more effectively in the future."

5. Search for possible solutions

- Objective: Brainstorming, exploring all possibilities.
- Methods: Brainstorming, seeking compromise.

- Important: Every party should have their say.

6. Reaching an agreement

- Objective: To establish a specific, clear and realistic solution.
- Important: it should be in writing, with deadlines and areas of responsibility.

7. Follow-up, evaluation

- Objective: To check whether the agreement is working.
- Questions:
 - Is the agreement being followed?
 - Has the relationship improved?
 - Are any changes needed?

I. Introductory thoughts – starting questions

Before you start on the specific tasks, try to answer the following questions based on your experience and knowledge so far.

- What does conflict mean?
- In what situations have you encountered conflict?
- What methods have you used to deal with conflict effectively?

II. Situational exercises

Situation 1: "The rude roommate"

Topic: I-messages, mediation techniques, emotional feedback

Anna comes out of the room crying and says, "I can't take it anymore, Fanni is a jerk, she's always teasing me, and she hid my slippers!"

The teacher now has to decide how to respond – they don't want Fanni to be stigmatised, but Anna also needs help.

Task 1

- How could the teacher respond sensitively and without judgement?
- Formulate an "I" message that the teacher could say to Anna or Fanni.
- Later: work out the steps of mediation if both are present.

Situation 2: "Bus situation – feeling of injustice"

Topic: Active listening, conflict-sensitive feedback

On the bus ride back from the camp trip, two students, Gergő and Máté, start arguing about where to sit. Gergő sat down first, but Máté says, "This was my seat on the way here!" The argument escalates, and Máté pushes Gergő angrily. The teacher steps in.

Task 2

- What might the teacher ask first?
- What kind of reflective statements could help the parties to understand each other?
- What should you say if neither of them is willing to give in?

Situation 3: "Noise disturbance at night – an exaggerated reaction?"

Topic: Recognising communication styles, giving feedback

After midnight, two people are still talking and laughing in a room. The third child, Tamás, exclaims irritably: "Shut up, you idiots! You can't behave yourselves!" In the morning, the others complain that Tamás was too aggressive.

Task 3

Read the three different reactions and decide which communication style characterises each response.

Choose from the following options: Aggressive, Passive, Assertive

Answer 1:

"I've had enough of you! You're always the reason I can't sleep! Be quiet right now, or I'll tell the teacher!"

This is:

- ☐ Aggressive
- ☐ Passive
- ☐ Assertive

Answer 2:

(Tamás says nothing, suffering in silence. He is tired and irritable in the morning, but does not say what is bothering him.)

This is:

- ☐ Aggressive
- ☐ Passive
- ☐ Assertive

Answer 3:

"Guys, I'm sorry, but it's hard for me to fall asleep when there's noise. Could you talk more quietly or go to the lounge?"

This is:

- ☐ Aggressive
- ☐ Passive
- ☐ Assertive

Task 4

Self-reflection: think about the following!

- Which reaction most closely resembles how you usually react in an uncomfortable situation?
- What are the advantages of this? And the disadvantages?

III. "Semi-automatic reactions" – Reflection exercise for teachers

This independent reflection exercise helps you recognise situations that trigger emotional responses and become aware of your own "main reaction patterns". The goal is to respond with conscious decisions in communication instead of semi-automatic reactions.

Task 1 – Immediate emotional reactions

Read the following situations.

Do not think too much! Write down your first emotional or physical reaction (e.g. anger, grimace, tightness, laughter, embarrassment, sigh, turning away).

Examples:

- A student says sarcastically, "Are you really serious about that, teacher?"
- A colleague questions your decision in front of the children.
- A student completely ignores what you say to them.
- A parent calls angrily: "Why is my child crying? What did you do to them?"

Task 2 – Verbal reflex

Now return to those situations and write down a single word for each case that expresses:

The feeling it triggered (e.g. anger, fear, confusion, helplessness) or

Your reflexive reaction (e.g. shouting, withdrawing, explaining, defending yourself)

Task 3 – Identify your "trigger point"

Which situation triggered the strongest reaction in you?

Why this one in particular? Do you have similar experiences from the past?

What "internal button" did this situation push?

Task 4 – Identifying behavioural patterns

Choose which reaction pattern you would most likely use in these situations:

- ☐ I escape (e.g. I avoid it, I remain silent)
- ☐ I confront (e.g. I react immediately, defend myself, fight back)
- ☐ I try to understand (e.g. I ask questions, interpret, wait)

Task 5 – Trying out an alternative response

Choose a situation to which you have reacted automatically in the past.

Write down an assertive, conscious response that could replace your reflex reaction.

IV. Conflict management strategies

4.1. The Thomas–Kilmann model

- Competition
- Avoidance

- Compromise
- Accommodation
- Collaboration

Exercise: "Which strategy am I?" – movement game / online voting

- Participants choose a strategy based on situations
- They discuss the reasons for their decisions

4.2. Situation cards

1. **Card:** Two children are fighting on the camp football pitch. One of them claims indignantly that he is always being teased.

Which strategy would be the best response?

2. **Card:** A colleague publicly criticises your decision in front of the children.

What would you do?

3. **Card:** Part of the group is left behind during the programme and now complains, "Why didn't you wait for us?"

How would you respond?

4. **Card:** Two teachers cannot agree on who should take the children on the trip.

Which strategy would you use?

5. **Card:** One child has been provoking his classmates all day. You have warned him several times.

What do you do?

6. **Card:** A child does not want to participate in the evening game because he thinks "it's stupid".

How do you respond?

7. **Card:** A parent calls and asks why their child did not call them back.

What do you say?

8. **Card:** At the end of camp, the food delivery is late. The children are hungry and restless.

What conflict management strategy would help here?

9. **Card:** Two children are arguing about room assignments. One bursts into tears, the other storms out angrily.

How do you resolve the situation?

10. **Card:** It starts raining during an activity and the children complain: "This isn't a camp, it's a prison."

What strategy would you use to manage the mood?

Suggested strategies

1. CARD

Suggested strategy: Cooperation

Why? There may be deeper issues behind the violent situation. It is important to listen to both sides, understand the reasons together, and find a long-term solution.

Possible steps: Mediation, providing a safe space for expressing emotions, establishing rules together.

2. CARD

Recommended strategy: Compromise or  Adaptation

Why? Public confrontation should be avoided; the teacher sets an example. In such cases, it is advisable to defuse the situation and initiate a private discussion later.

Note: If the issue is important to you, compromise is the better choice. However, if protecting the children is the priority, adaptation can help to ease tensions.

3. CARD

Recommended strategy: Compromise

Why? Both sides have valid points. It is important to maintain boundaries (the order of the programme), but if possible, offer a partial solution (e.g. an alternative game).

Example sentence: "I understand that you are disappointed – next time we will discuss how we can leave on time. But now let's see what you can get involved in."

4. CARD

Recommended strategy: Cooperation

Why? The goal is to ease tension and share responsibility. It is important that decisions are not made hierarchically, but based on mutual agreement.

Possible solution: Ask the group to agree on a common time or order, or suggest a rotation system.

5. CARD

Recommended strategy: Competition (decisive intervention), followed by cooperation

Why? If boundaries are constantly being crossed, the first step is to send a clear and consistent message. After that, it is worth understanding the reasons behind the behaviour.

Recommended action: Set clear boundaries, then seek out the motives in a separate conversation and offer alternative behaviours.

6. CARD

Recommended strategy: Compromise or adaptation

Why? It is important to respect individual needs, but also to show alternatives.

Recommended action: Offer a choice ("Would you like to be a spectator? Or would you rather help with another task tomorrow?").

7. CARD

Recommended strategy: Adaptation, then compromise

Why? First, it is worth reassuring the parent and acknowledging their concern. Then, explain your own perspective (e.g. being busy).

Example sentence: "I understand that you are worried, and rightly so. Unfortunately, I was unable to call you back immediately, but it is important to me that you are kept informed."

8. CARD

Recommended strategy: Cooperation

Why? You can prevent the mood from deteriorating by involving the group in finding a solution together (e.g. playing a game, filling in the waiting time).

Example: "Let's play a fun movement game while we wait for lunch, and then we'll prepare the venue together!"

9. CARD

Recommended strategy: Cooperation

Why? It is important that both parties can express their feelings. Create a safe environment for discussion and help them find a compromise.

Step: Give them time to calm down, then use helpful questions to explore their needs and find a solution together.

10. CARD

Recommended strategy: Adaptation and cooperation

Why? Managing the emotional atmosphere is paramount. Show empathy, then involve them in coming up with a new programme.

Example: "You're right, this wasn't planned this way. But now let's have a competition to see who can come up with the most creative indoor programme!"

IV. Closing, reflection and questions

Task:

"My conflict management toolkit" – Formulate three key lessons you will take away from the training:

Remember! "Conflict is not a mistake, but an opportunity: for self-awareness, for strengthening relationships, and for setting a good example.

Sources

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